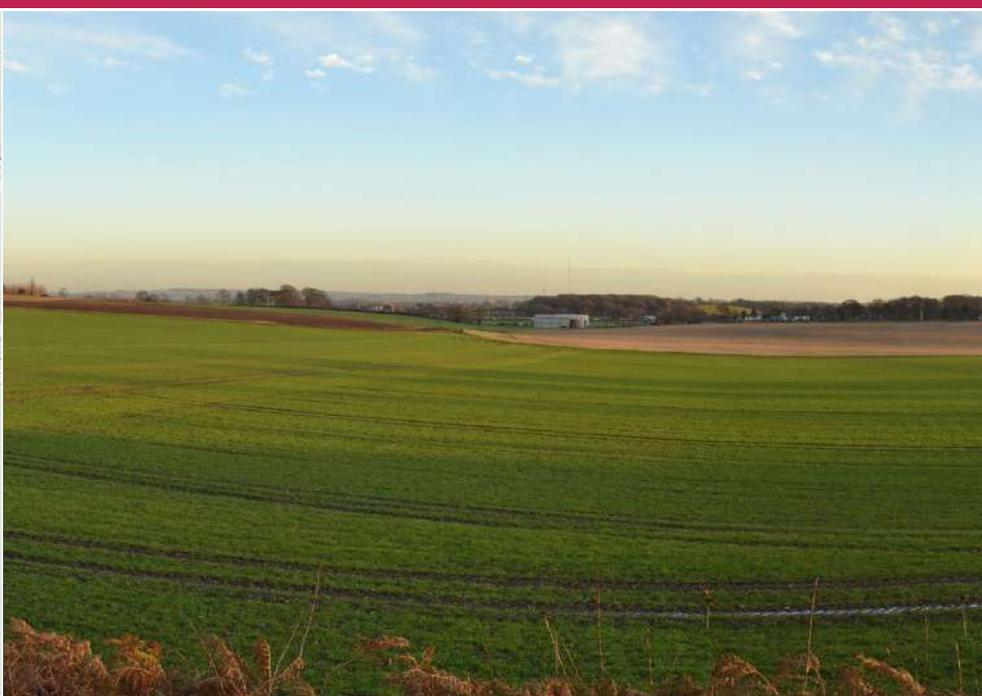


LAND AT HOME FARM, SANDHILLS, WALSALL

TECHNICAL COMPENDIUM ON BEHALF OF L&Q ESTATES



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Executive Summary

This Technical Compendium has been prepared on behalf of L&Q Estates and demonstrates that land at Home Farm, Sandhills provides an ideal opportunity to create a sustainable, residential development adjoining the town of Brownhills. The site is being promoted for residential development through the Black Country Plan Review.

In summary:

- The Black Country Core Strategy (2011) identifies Brownhills as a 'Regeneration Corridor'. It has a population of c. 12,500 and is connected to other suburban areas such as Pelsall, Shelfield, Aldridge, with Walsall, Sutton Coldfield and Lichfield beyond, and as such is a sustainable location for development.
- The development requirements within the adopted Black Country Core Strategy are significantly out of date. A recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment for the Black Country and South Staffordshire has identified a need for 78,190 homes for the Black Country between 2014 and 2036. Work undertaken to date suggests that of the 78,190 homes requirement, the existing urban areas only has the capacity to deliver approximately 56,520 homes, leaving a local shortfall in housing land to deliver 21,670 homes. This shortfall constitutes exceptional circumstances to justify for Green Belt release.
- The release of the site from the Green Belt would not compromise the five purposes of the Green Belt.
- The site would deliver on the three aspects of sustainable development, including providing an economic objective (through construction jobs and materials, expenditure in the local economy from future residents and additional Council Tax contributions); a social objective (through the provision of a range of types and mix of homes and through the delivery of a quality development that will enhance the quality of life for existing and future residents); and an environmental objective (through enhanced environmental features, including new landscaping and green space).
- The site is not affected by any overriding physical, environmental or technical constraints.
- The Illustrative Masterplan demonstrates that the site could deliver circa 1,200 dwellings, complete with open space including landscape buffers and attenuation features and the potential for a mixed use centre and Primary School.
- The proposed development is highly sustainable and deliverable.

- L&Q Estates is committed to working with Walsall Council, the local community and stakeholders to design a high quality development, which compliments and enhances the wider community of Brownhills.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Technical Compendium relates to the site known as 'Home Farm, Sandhills, Walsall'. The site location is shown on **Figure 1.1** and site context is shown on **Figure 1.2**.

1.1.2 The purpose of this Technical Compendium is to provide further information to identify the suitability, availability and achievability of the site to inform emerging planning policy preparation in Walsall District and the wider Black Country. Previous Background Documents were prepared in 2013, 2015 and 2017 in response to the earlier consultations. Where applicable, information has been updated to take into consideration any changes in the local area or other relevant contextual and technical information.

1.1.3 It is considered that this Technical Compendium also demonstrates the soundness of this site as a future strategic allocation for residential development. In light of this, the site should be considered as one that is capable of contributing towards delivering the Council's future dwelling requirements.

1.2 L&Q Estates

1.2.1 L&Q Estates is a major strategic land promotion company operating across the UK with a track record for successfully delivering many large-scale developments. The company has a specific focus on the residential sector, and acts as 'Master Developer' by retaining responsibility through all stages of the development process. The company is not a house builder, but instead facilitates development through the provision of infrastructure and community facilities to enable serviced land parcels to be offered for sale to the house building industry.

1.2.2 L&Q Estates was appointed by the land owners in July 2013 to exclusively promote this site for a residential led development. L&Q Estates have the full support of the land owner whom they have a close working relationship with and have a long-term agreement covering the full length of the current plan period.

1.2.3 In terms of availability, there are no legal or ownership problems, such as multiple ownership, ransom strips, tenancies or operational requirements of the land owners and therefore there are no known constraints that would inhibit the development of the site.

1.2.4 In respect of achievability, residential development is an economically viable prospect for the site.

1.3 Site Description and Context

- 1.3.1 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.
- 1.3.2 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.
- 1.3.3 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.
- 1.3.4 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.
- 1.3.5 Brownhills is identified as a Regeneration Corridor in the Black Country Core Strategy (2011). It 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.

1.3 Contents of the Technical Compendium

- 1.4.1 This Technical Compendium considers the pertinent environmental issues identified in the context of the site in order to demonstrate the suitability, availability and achievability of the site, including further detail in respect of how the site could be developed for residential purposes. All of which provides evidence to support the identification of the site as a future strategic allocation. Figures are included within each chapter where required.

1.4.2 The Technical Compendium is structured as follows:

- **Executive Summary:** provides an Executive Summary of the findings of the Technical Compendium
- **Chapter 1: Introduction:** provides an introduction to the site and explains the purpose and content of the document.
- **Chapter 2: Landscape and Visual Context:** considers the capacity of the site to accommodate development in relation to landscape and visual issues.
- **Chapter 3: Indicative Development Framework:** provides an Illustrative Masterplan and accompanying text to demonstrate how the proposals could be successfully accommodated on the site.
- **Chapter 4: Transportation:** considers the accessibility of the site to public transport and nearby facilities and details the capacity of the surrounding highway network and potential access arrangements.
- **Chapter 5: Ecology:** considers ecological and nature conservation issues in relation to the site.
- **Chapter 6: Archaeology and Cultural Heritage:** considers heritage matters in relation to the site.
- **Chapter 7: Drainage:** provides initial information on the flood risk of the site and discusses appropriate drainage strategies to ensure development can be accommodated on the site.
- **Chapter 8: Ground Conditions:** considers the relevant geotechnical matters relative to this site.
- **Chapter 9: Agricultural Land:** considers the agricultural land quality of the site.
- **Chapter 10: Conclusions:** provides an overview of the findings and conclusions of the Technical Compendium.

1.4.3 The specialist consultants who have contributed to the preparation of this technical information are referenced in the Project Directory at the front of this document.

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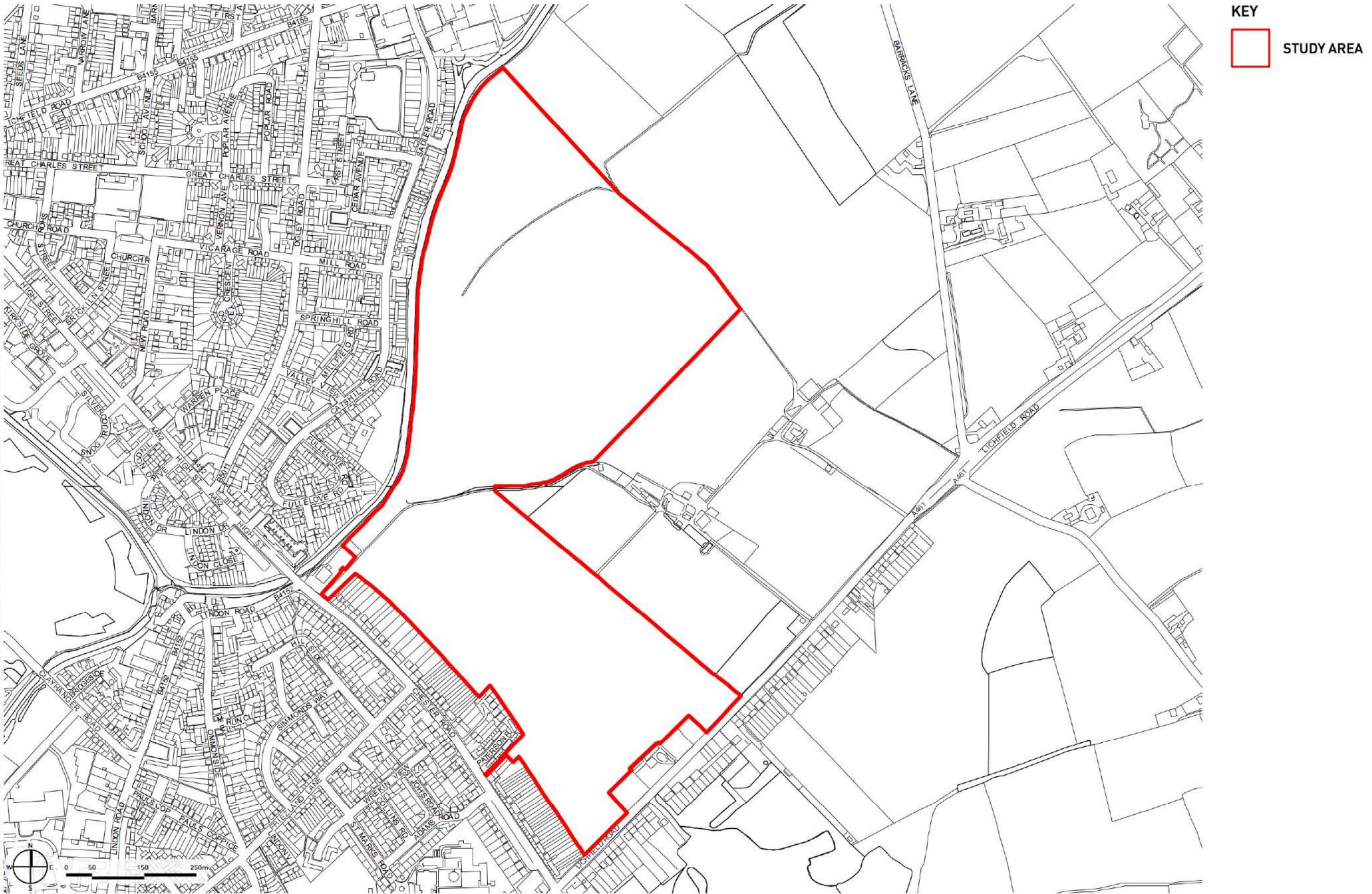


FIGURE 1.1

LAND AT HOME FARM, BROWNHILLS - SITE LOCATION PLAN



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KEY



STUDY AREA

FIGURE 1.2

LAND AT HOME FARM, BROWNHILLS - SITE CONTEXT PLAN

2. Landscape and Visual Context

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 Pegasus Group has been instructed by L&Q Estates Ltd to undertake a preliminary landscape and visual appraisal report, in support of the promotion of Land at Home Farm, Sandhills, Walsall (referred to as 'the site').
- 2.1.2 There are two matters to consider in relation to the acceptability of the site in landscape and visual terms, firstly the capacity of the site to accommodate development without undue consequences for the baseline and, secondly, the current Green Belt designation and the role of the site in relation to its function and contribution to the Green Belt.
- 2.1.3 This preliminary appraisal considers the baseline conditions for the site and its surrounding landscape context; provides a brief landscape and visual analysis at both a contextual and a site-specific level; and identifies the various landscape and visual constraints and opportunities in relation to the site. Combined with further analysis in terms of its current role within the Green Belt, a comprehensive landscape strategy for the site is put forward, including how this will continue to maintain the Green Belt in the local area.
- 2.1.4 This preliminary appraisal has been completed using both desk study and site survey techniques. Field work was carried out in August 2020 to review the existing landscape baseline and character of the site and its surrounding context. Where applicable, the concepts and procedures set out in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition, April 2013) have been adopted.

2.2 Site Description

- 2.2.1 The site extends to c. 55.03 ha and is irregular in plan form, comprising several field enclosures of different sizes. It is defined to the north-west by the Wyrley and Essington Canal and associated vegetation along it. To the south-west the site is defined by the rear curtilage of residential properties on the eastern side of the A452 Chester Road. To the south-east it is defined by the A461 Lichfield Road and the field boundaries associated with farm buildings to the south-east. To the north-east the site is defined by field boundaries, coincidental with the district boundary between Walsall Council and Lichfield District Council.
- 2.2.2 Just south-east of the site, there are two building groupings, both in close proximity to the A461 Lichfield Road. To the north is Sandhills Farm, including several small brick buildings and some large agricultural sheds. Access to it is from Lichfield Road. Slightly further south is Home Farm, including the red brick Farmhouse itself, with other farm buildings behind. Access to it is from the Lichfield Road, and the access track extends past Home Farm to a series of other buildings, in private residential use.

- 2.2.3 In terms of topography, the site is located on an area of gently sloping agricultural land between approximately +170m AOD at the junction of the Chester Road and Lichfield Road, to approximately +140m AOD beyond the district boundary of Walsall. Beyond this, the landform rises to approximately +150m AOD to the north.
- 2.2.4 Land on site is currently in arable production. Field enclosures vary in size and shape. On the southern parts of the site, the enclosures are generally small to medium sized and rectangular; in the central part of the site and extending west to the canal, there is a much larger, irregularly shaped enclosure that occupies the lowest lying land.
- 2.2.5 Vegetation is generally confined to the southern and central parts of the site. This includes a triangular shaped woodland copse to the north-west of the private buildings behind Home Farm and a partly fragmented hedgerow that extends from Lichfield Road towards the tree copse. There is also some vegetation associated with the back gardens of properties fronting Chester Road on the south-western site boundary.
- 2.2.6 In the immediate context, to the south-east of the site, there is a treed hedgerow just south of Home Farm; and a mature woodland copse south of Home Farm along the Lichfield Road frontage. Both the access tracks to Home Farm and Sandhills Farm are tree lined, and the track that links the two buildings groupings is also tree lined.
- 2.2.7 The site is currently included as part of the West Midlands Green Belt. There are no landscape specific designations which cover the site or the immediate area.

2.3 Landscape Planning Framework

- 2.3.1 In the context of the relevant planning framework, the following section sets out a summary of those policies specific to the landscape and visual issues pertaining to the proposed development and which will have implications for the landscape mitigation strategy presented in this preliminary appraisal (refer to **Figure 1: Site Location and Planning Designations**).

2.4 European Landscape Convention

- 2.4.1 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes. The ELC was adopted on 20th October 2000 and came into force on 1st March 2004. It defines landscape as

“...an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors).”

- 2.4.2 This definition is important in that it focuses on landscape as a resource in its own right and moves beyond the idea that landscapes are only a matter of aesthetic.

2.5 National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.5.1 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in February 2019, setting out the Government’s planning policies for England and providing a framework within which the appropriate local council can produce local and neighbourhood plans; the NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions¹.

- 2.5.2 The NPPF sets out three dimensions to achieving sustainable development that include economic, social and environmental considerations. It places an onus on the planning system to perform a role in relation to the environment that ‘contributes to the protection and enhancement of our natural, built and historic environment...’ going on to note that sustainable solutions should take account of local circumstances and reflect the character of each area. This underpins the strategic guidance set out in the NPPF in relation to landscape and visual matters.

- 2.5.3 In relation to landscape and visual matters, achieving well-designed places (Section 12) aims to ensure that developments are ‘visually attractive’, are sympathetic to local character (including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting) and to establish and

¹ Para 2, MHCLG, NPPF (February 2019)

maintain a strong sense of place².

- 2.5.4 Section 15 of the NPPF addresses on ‘conserving and enhancing the natural environment’ stating that policies and decisions should contribute to this by ‘protecting and enhancing valued landscapes (noting that this should be commensurate with a statutory status or identified quality identified in a development plan) and also recognising the ‘intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside’³.
- 2.5.5 NPPF notes the importance that designs ‘evolve’ in response to local issues and to the views of the community⁴.

2.6 Planning Practice Guidance Documents

- 2.6.1 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) is a web-based resource prepared by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The NPPG sets out guidance across various topics and effectively supersedes previous guidance on many aspects of planning; topics are updated as required.
- 2.6.2 The PPG for the ‘Natural Environment’ (updated July 2019) addresses agricultural land, green infrastructure, biodiversity, and landscape.
- 2.6.3 In relation to green infrastructure (GI) the PPG acknowledges how a ‘range of spaces and assets’ can provide ‘environmental and wider benefits’. The PPG states that GI can include⁵:
“...parks, playing fields, other areas of open space, woodland, allotments, private gardens, sustainable drainage features, green roofs and walls, street trees and ‘blue infrastructure’ such as streams, ponds, canals and other water bodies.”
- 2.6.4 The PPG goes on to recognise how GI can help achieve well designed spaces, and conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. The PPG also recognises the benefit of considering GI ‘at the earliest stage of development proposals, as an integral part of development and infrastructure provision, and taking into account existing natural assets’.
- 2.6.5 In relation to landscape, the PPG reiterates the requirements of the NPPF in terms of ‘recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside’. The PPG states that⁶:
“Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out

² Para 127, MHCLG, NPPF (February 2019)

³ Section 15 and para 170, MHCLG, NPPF (February 2019)

⁴ Para 128, MHCLG, NPPF (February 2019)

⁵ NPPG, Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 8-004-20190721 (21 July 2019)

⁶ NPPG, Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721 (21 July 2019)

criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary.”

2.6.6 The PPG also notes the relevance of landscape character assessment, landscape sensitivity/capacity assessment and landscape and visual impact assessment. However, whilst recognising these different aspects of landscape analysis, the PPG does not reflect the subtle variations in these and potential overlap between their different uses and requirements.

2.7 Green Belt policy

2.7.1 The site is located within the West Midlands Green Belt. It is recognised that Green Belt designation is one of land use control, with policy designed to retain the essential characteristics of Green Belts: their openness and their permanence (NPPF para. 133). Green Belt is not a designation that seeks to protect a landscape of any particular quality or amenity value.

2.7.2 Notwithstanding the differentiation, the PPG on Green Belt (updated July 2019) recognises a connection between landscape and visual matters. The PPG addresses three areas in respect of Green Belt, including factors to be considered for potential impacts on openness, potential for compensatory measures to offset impact of removing land from the Green Belt; and mechanisms for securing such measures. The PPG states that:

“...openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects - in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume...”

2.7.3 The NPPG also address where compensatory improvements might be used to offset impacts on the Green Belt by its removal; these extend to issues of environmental quality and/or accessibility of the remaining Green Belt land. Examples of potential measures are noted in the NPPG as:

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

2.8 Local planning policy

2.8.1 At the time of writing, the development plan for Walsall, which sets out the planning context for the site and its context currently comprises:

- Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) 2011;
- Walsall Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2005 – ‘saved’ policies; and
- UDP Proposals Map and Town and District Centre Inset Maps.

2.9 Black Country Core Strategy

2.9.1 The current adopted Black Country Core Strategy sets out the long-term vision, objectives and planning policies for the district.

2.9.2 Spatial Objective 6 is to deliver:

“A high quality environment fit for the future, and a strong Urban Park focused on beacons, corridors and communities; respecting, protecting and enhancing the unique biodiversity and geodiversity of the Black Country and making the most of its assets whilst valuing its local character and industrial legacy.”

2.9.3 Policy ENV2: Historic Character and Local Distinctiveness states that:

“Development proposals will be required to preserve and, where appropriate, enhance local character and those aspects of the historic environment together with their settings which are recognised as being of special historic, archaeological, architectural, landscape or townscape quality.”

2.10 Walsall Unitary Development Plan (saved policies)

2.10.1 The Walsall Unitary Development Plan (UDP) strategic policy statement outlines the aims of sustainable development, urban regeneration, economic revitalisation, environmental improvement and social inclusion that underlie all of the Plan’s policies. It states that development proposals will be evaluated against these fundamental aims.

2.10.2 The UDP sets out the strategy for conservation, enhancement and management of the countryside and Green Belt through several environmental policies that include ENV1 which sets out the boundaries of the Green Belt; ENV2 which deals with control of development in the Green Belt and is generally against the construction of new buildings except those for a

number of specific purposes; and ENV3 which outlines detailed design principles for any development deemed acceptable under ENV2.

2.10.3 The UDP also sets out the following under Policy ENV33 (Landscape Design):

“(a) Good landscape design is an integral part of urban design and the Council will require, where appropriate, planning applications proposing development in the locations described in policy ENV32 to be supported by full details of external layout and landscape proposals.

(b) In addition, development proposals meeting any of the following criteria will also be required to be supported by full details of external layout and landscape proposals:- I. Land which the Council is expected to adopt. II. Development sites containing natural and built features the Council requires to be retained or enhanced. III. Residential/ nursing homes where residents would benefit from the sensory stimulation provided by a landscape scheme and who are not in a position to secure it for themselves. IV. Larger development proposals.”

2.10.4 Policy ENV 32 (Design and Development Proposals) advises poorly designed development or proposals which fail to properly take account of the context or surroundings will not be permitted.

2.11 Black Country Plan Evidence Base Documents

2.11.1 There are several other documents relevant to the site produced as part of the evidence base for the proposed Black Country Plan (a reviews of the Black Country Core Strategy). The Black Country Plan is a planning framework for the whole of the Black Country. It is a joint plan produced by the four Black Country councils (Dudley, Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Walsall). It is produced to meet the future development needs of the area and to reflect the aspirations of local communities.

2.11.2 Those recently published documents which form part of the Black Country Plan evidence base relevant to the site and its context in terms of landscape and visual matters are:

- Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study 2019;
- Black Country Green Belt Study 2019; and
- Black Country Landscape Sensitivity Assessment 2019.

2.11.3 These documents and their relevance to the site and its context are summarised below and considered in sections 4 and 5 of this report.

2.12 Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study

2.12.1 The purpose of the Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation study was to carry out a strategic assessment of locally distinctive places, landscapes, buildings and structures of historic quality and character in the Black Country, covering both urban and non-urban areas.

2.12.2 The outcome of the work is the identification of several specific historic landscape typologies, including:

- Archaeological Priority Areas: areas likely to have high archaeological and historic interest.
- Areas of High Historic Townscape Value: areas where built heritage makes a significant contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- Designed Landscapes of High Historic Value: landscape areas that make an important contribution to local historic character but do not meet the criteria for inclusion on the national Register for Parks and Gardens.
- Areas of High Historic Landscape Value: The significance of these areas is likely to be derived from their archaeological and historic interests.

2.12.3 The site lies within Character Area WL04: Brownhills and Walsall Wood but does not fall within any of the typologies identified above.

2.13 Black Country Green Belt Study

2.13.1 The Black Country Green Belt Study (2019) has been produced to give the Black Country Authorities a detailed picture of individual areas of Green Belt as part of the evidence needed for the Black Country Plan. The assessment will help the Black Country Authorities to understand if there is any suitable land within the Green Belt, which, after further detailed assessment and consultation, of other relevant evidence, could be put forward as an option for removal from the Green Belt for development.

2.13.2 The study rates areas within the Green Belt as to how they contribute to the five purposes of the Green Belt; rates the remaining areas of Green Belt against the harm which would be caused by their removal from the Green Belt to the integrity of the remaining Green Belt; and assesses how far the landscape character of each Green Belt area would be sensitive to development.

2.14 Black Country Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

2.14.1 The Black Country Landscape Sensitivity Assessment considers areas of Green Belt land within the Black Country. It was undertaken alongside, but discrete from the Green Belt Study for the Black Country previously summarised in this report.

- 2.14.2 The assessment of landscape sensitivity to housing and commercial development uses a criteria-based process. The purpose of this study is to provide an assessment of the extent to which the character and quality of the landscape abutting the West Midlands conurbation within the Black Country is, in principle, susceptible to change as a result of introducing built development.
- 2.14.3 The judgement on the overall landscape sensitivity of an area is based on consideration of the range of sensitivities identified and the weight attached to any particular criteria in the area in question. An overall rating is given on a five-point scale.
- 2.14.4 The site is located within landscape area BL36, as identified by the study. This parcel is considered to be of 'moderate' sensitivity.

2.15 Landscape Character

- 2.15.1 In terms of national landscape character, the site is located within National Character Area Profile 67: Cannock Chase and Cank Wood, as published by Natural England (2012).
- 2.15.2 At local level, Walsall Council does not have a published landscape/townscape character assessment. The site is located however at the boundary of Walsall and Lichfield District and displays many similarities to the Sandstone Estatelands: Farmland Landscape Character Type/Subtype of the Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment, 'Planning for Landscape Change' Supplementary Planning Guidance (2001).

2.16 Visual Amenity

- 2.16.1 Several representative viewpoint photographs from local visual receptors have been taken from the surrounding landscape. The location of these is shown on **Figure 2: Viewpoint Locations and Public Rights of Way**. The photographs are presented on **Figure 3: Viewpoint Photographs**. The following section describes the visual relationship between the site and the surrounding landscape.
- 2.16.2 In visual terms, whilst the site and its context comprise generally open arable fields, the combination of local rises in landform, mature woodland blocks and tree belts (in particular along roads) means that the site is relatively well contained from the wider landscape. Views towards it are typically short distance, as described in the following section.

2.17 Visual envelope

- 2.17.1 The visual envelope is the area of landscape from which a site or proposed development will potentially be visible. It accounts for general judgements on the theoretical visibility of a site or proposed development. The extent of a visual envelope will be influenced by the physical

landscape components of an area, such as hedgerows, woodlands or buildings and can also be influenced by distance.

- 2.17.2 From the north, the visual envelope of the site is limited by local undulations in landform combined with adjacent built form along the B4155, Lichfield Road and Barracks Lane. From areas to the east, the visual envelope is contained by Barracks Lane and the localised ridgeline that lies between Whitacre Lane and Cartersfield Lane. From the south, rising landform and existing properties along the A461 (Lichfield Road) and along Chester Road (which line the south-western site boundary) limit views across the site. From the west, the existing settlement area of Brownhills lies immediately adjacent to the Wyrley and Essington Canal which follows the north-western site boundary and serves to limit views of the site from beyond those available immediately adjacent to it.

2.18 Representative viewpoints and visual receptors

- 2.18.1 The following viewpoints have been included as representative locations (refer to **Figure 2** and **Figure 3**):

- Viewpoint 1: View from Wyrley and Essington Canal towpath, looking south-west.
- Viewpoint 2: View from Wyrley and Essington Canal towpath, looking south-west.
- Viewpoint 3: View View from Wyrley and Essington Canal towpath, looking south-east.
- Viewpoint 4: View from Barracks Lane, looking west.
- Viewpoint 5: View from overbridge (M6 Toll) looking south-west.
- Viewpoint 6: View from Lichfield Road (A461) looking north-west.
- Viewpoint 7: View from Lichfield Road (A461), east of Shire Oak, looking north-west.
- Viewpoint 8: View from Lichfield Road (A461), southern boundary of site, looking north-west.

- 2.18.2 Receptors of the highest sensitivity include residents; people engaged in outdoor recreation whose attention is likely to be focused on the landscape, for example, users of PROW in the open countryside; and visitors to heritage or tourist attractions where views of the landscape are important to their setting or experience.

- 2.18.3 Receptors of intermediate sensitivity include users of local roads and sign-posted scenic routes where views of the landscape are likely to be important.

- 2.18.4 Receptors of lowest sensitivity include people engaged in outdoor sport where an appreciation of the landscape is not important to the activity; office workers who are focused on their job; and road and rail users travelling through a landscape at speed.

- 2.18.5 From the north, the site is visible from receptors using the Wyrley and Essington canal towpath (refer to **Viewpoint 1, Figure 3**), as well as a occupiers of residential properties (in particular those that are three storeys or located where the local topography is rising to the north-east of the canal), along the existing settlement edge to the north.
- 2.18.6 Vehicle users travelling through the landscape along Barracks Lane will have some views of the site, limited to a greater or lesser extent by a combination of field boundary vegetation and topography (refer to **Viewpoint 4, Figure 3**).
- 2.18.7 From the north-east, the site is not visible from where the A5 and M6 toll roads cross over at the Boat Lane junction. This is mainly due to the rising topography and existing vegetation in the direction of Brownhills to the south. Views from the Muckley Corner area are similarly limited.
- 2.18.8 From the south-east, there are views towards the site from the A461 Lichfield Road, from where Home Farm and Sandhills Farm buildings are visible in the foreground, together with their tree lined access tracks (refer to **Viewpoint 6, Figure 3**). In these views, the combination of farm buildings and mature trees is characteristic.
- 2.18.9 From the south, there are both public and private views from Lichfield Road looking into the southern part of the site, and further across it to the north with more elevated countryside in the distance including the south-east fringes of Cannock Chase. There will also be private views from occupiers of residential properties backing on to the site from Chester Road (refer to **Viewpoint 8, Figure 3**).
- 2.18.10 From the west, the site is visible from receptors using the Wyrley and Essington canal towpath (refer to **Viewpoints 2 and 3, Figure 3**); notably where the localised elevation of this path rises and where the hedgerow is absent. In these views, the central parts of the site can be seen, with the urban edge of Brownhills on rising land beyond, characterised in part by mature vegetation.
- 2.18.11 Overall, views towards the site are limited to several localised visual receptors that include occupiers of residential properties along the existing settlement edge of Brownhills, users of the canal towpath, and users of the local road network.

2.19 Landscape and Visual Analysis

- 2.19.1 The following section sets out a brief analysis of the constraints and opportunities for the site and subsequently an outline landscape strategy which addresses the various characteristics and issues identified above. The landscape strategy will present an appropriate framework on which future development proposals can be brought forward in a way that aims to minimise potential impacts and is acceptable in landscape and visual terms.

2.19.2 The contextual landscape and visual analysis can be summarised as follows:

- The context comprises a functional landscape, generally consistent with local landscape character studies, however heavily influenced by urban areas and elements of built form, notably highways infrastructure (including the well trafficked A461 and the M6 Toll motorway);
- Other urbanising or 'urban fringe' elements and features include Springhill Cemetery to the east, Shire Oak Quarry to the south and various small-scale commercial land uses including vehicle dealers;
- The local landscape character is degraded in part, primarily showing the effects of the removal of hedgerows following intensification of arable farming practices;
- In terms of visual amenity, containment is provided to the north and west by built form; although relatively open views from the canal towpath are possible looking south; and
- The landscape is more open to the south and east, although views are usually short to mid distance and limited by the combination of local topography and vegetation pattern, as well as being influenced by the existing urban edge.

2.19.3 The site-specific landscape and visual analysis can be summarised as follows:

- The site topography is such that it forms a localised 'topographical bowl' in its central and northern parts, formed by rising topography both to the north and south;
- This 'bowl' is more visually contained in the wider landscape;
- The southern part of the site, adjacent to the existing settlement edge, gives the perception of being more enclosed, notwithstanding its higher elevation, primarily due to the vegetation structure on and adjacent to it;
- The northern part of the site contrasts with this, and retains a distinct lack of vegetation infrastructure;
- The relatively sparse managed hedgerows on site provide limited habitat connectivity;
- The tranquillity of the site is reduced both visually and audibly by the proximity of the A461;
- The triangular copse, in combination with the Home Farm buildings complex just beyond the site to the east serve to define a 'threshold' between the differing characters of the south and central/northern parts of this part of the local landscape;
- The farm building complexes to the east, in combination with mature tree planting, generate a pleasant visual composition when viewed from the A461 Lichfield Road corridor towards the site; and

- There is no public access on the site itself, however the towpath along the Wyrley and Essington Canal does retain amenity value and good visual connectivity with the site where the adjacent hedgerow is absent and does not channel views along the canal;
- The published Black Country Landscape Sensitivity Assessment identifies the parcel within which the site is located as being of 'moderate' sensitivity to development;
- This is likely to reduce across the site itself by virtue of scale (the site boundary being retained to the northern and western areas of the parcel, adjacent to the existing settlement edge) and the increased influence of the urban edge.

2.20 Constraints and Opportunities

- 2.20.1 The constraints and opportunities for the site and its surrounding landscape context have been identified following the review of baseline information on landscape and visual matters (see **Figure 4: Contextual Landscape and Visual Analysis**). These can be used to help identify and define a robust and appropriate development envelope for the site.
- 2.20.2 It should be noted that landscape and visual constraints can be used to guide the development of a proposal in a positive manner, often leading to opportunities and not just creating absolute constraints to development.
- 2.20.3 The constraints for the site are:
- The site is located within the West Midlands Green Belt;
 - The proximity of the site to the Wyrley and Essington Canal towpath and potential views from higher sensitivity receptors using it; and
 - Existing mature woodland infrastructure within the site and along its boundaries.
- 2.20.4 Landscape and visual opportunities can be summarised as follows:
- The site and its immediate context are not subject to any landscape-related designations, nor is there any intervisibility between the site and any promoted viewpoints or designated landscapes;
 - The site is located directly adjacent to the existing settlement edge of Brownhills, providing visual containment and existing reference to residential development along the northern and western boundaries;
 - The landform of the site slopes down to the south-west towards the existing urban edge;
 - The presence of mature vegetation including hedgerows, hedgerow trees, and woodland blocks within and around the site will help to minimise the visual envelope of the site and

contribute to the capacity of the site to accommodate development;

- The presence of detracting features such as the large industrial units to the north-west and the M6 Toll motorway corridor to the north-east exert some urbanising influences on the site and its immediate context;
- Existing water bodies and drainage ditches provide opportunities for wetland planting, recreation, and habitat enhancement; and
- Existing vegetation and green infrastructure along the boundaries of the site, including tree and woodland cover, provide opportunities for enhancement through a comprehensive landscape strategy.

2.21 Landscape strategy

2.21.1 Following the initial stages of this preliminary LVA, a development framework for the site has been informed by reference to the constraints and opportunities present (see **Figure 5: Green Infrastructure Strategy**). This has ensured that landscape and visual constraints are considered as part of the design process. 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.

2.21.2 Mitigation measures are intended to prevent, reduce, remedy or offset adverse effects of a development proposal and an appropriate approach to mitigation should include the formation of a robust landscape and green infrastructure strategy. Therefore, the landscape and visual strategy for the site is outlined below, and is founded on the following principles:

- Identification of a suitable 'development envelope', the location of which pays particular attention to the views both from and to the site, local topography, enhancement of the local network of green infrastructure and also local landscape character;
- Retention and enhancement of the existing vegetation on the site and along site boundaries, wherever possible (subject to constraints such as highways matters); and
- Creation of additional green infrastructure and open space on site, taking into account landscape character and visual containment of the site in order to propose landscape mitigation which is both consistent with and complementary to, the existing local landscape character in terms of scale, disposition and species mix.

2.21.3 The key elements which should be incorporated into a landscape strategy for the site are summarised as follows.

2.22 Development envelope and layout

- 2.22.1 A development envelope for a site is an area identified within which residential development would sit and it is a constraint on the scale of a proposed development. The development envelope is defined by the site analysis.
- 2.22.2 The development envelope for the site responds to the initial landscape and visual analysis that has identified areas which retain good capacity for development. It essentially comprises two overall parts. The highways analysis has identified two points of access: a primary one from the A461; linking to a secondary access off the Chester Road. These will serve the first part of the development envelope which extends across the south-western part of the site. Although the land is slightly elevated in this location, it remains relatively enclosed and relates well to the existing settlement edge.
- 2.22.3 Highways access then extends northwards at one end of the retained triangular woodland copse, to access the second overall part of the development envelope; the retained copse providing visual screening and an element of separation. This is set on the lower lying land in the topographical bowl and extends northwards, up to the municipal boundary (see **Figure 6: Long Landscape Sections**). Again, the overall scale of this part of the envelope is broken down into two distinct parcels.
- 2.22.4 The western edges of the overall development envelope are considered very important in terms of their alignment. The Wyrley and Essington canal corridor and its tow path retain some amenity value. Whilst there is an established hedgerow between the path and the site, the open character of the site is evident in part. The development envelope has therefore been set back to retain this perceived openness, with the creation of a linear park that adjacent development could front on to. As the tow path extends north, the level of the tow path rises in relation to the site such that views extend southwards across the site. The development envelope is set further back in this location in order to address this and retain a depth of view across open space.
- 2.22.5 The agricultural land surrounding the existing farm buildings is proposed to be retained. This addresses matters of both private amenity and the retention of the existing visual composition of landscape and built form from the A461.

2.23 Strategy for existing vegetation

- 2.23.1 Within and around the development envelope, consideration will be given to the existing vegetation (including trees, hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodland areas). Where possible these landscape elements should be retained and integrated into the layout of both developable areas and open space.

- 2.23.2 In some instances, the existing landscape elements, such as hedgerow and trees along the A461 Lichfield Road can be reinforced and enhanced through additional landscaping and improved management; the aims of which should consider location, function and biodiversity objectives.
- 2.23.3 There will inevitably be some limited losses of vegetation across the site as a result of the proposed development which is most likely to occur as a result of potential site access from the A461 Lichfield Road, and possibly Chester Road, where the potential for a secondary access point is located. Such losses should be minimised and where they are predicted to occur, they should be balanced by proposals for the retention and implementation of vegetation, including new landscape planting which would be implemented as part of the strategy for green infrastructure and open spaces.
- 2.23.4 Taking this approach to the existing vegetation structure around the site would ensure that the scale and form of the proposed development responds to the landscape elements and features present; this would help to integrate the proposed development into the site and with the context of local landscape character. The retention of existing vegetation would provide an immediate impact in terms of green infrastructure and this will help to reduce visual impact and integrate the proposed development into the local landscape.

2.24 Green infrastructure and open space

- 2.24.1 The development envelope has been identified integrally with a comprehensive green infrastructure strategy. Creation of a robust green infrastructure network across the site is a key component of the proposed development and will not only provide landscape and visual mitigation but will also enhance the landscape resource and add value to it.
- 2.24.2 The landscape and visual analysis identified some areas of the site where hedgerow infrastructure was limited. This is also highlighted by the Black Country Landscape Sensitivity Assessment. It is considered important to build on the existing elements of vegetation through enhancement and new planting.
- 2.24.3 A robust green infrastructure 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.

2.24.4 The introduction of woodland belts along the eastern edge of the development envelope, combined with the set back of the proposed development from the wider landscape to the east (retaining the development envelope to those areas closest to the existing urban edge) will serve to maintain views of open space when approaching Sandhills along the A461 Lichfield Road and filter views of the proposed development.

2.25 Landscape scheme and detailed design

2.25.1 The layout of proposals for the site should incorporate substantial areas of private garden space as well as the proposed publicly accessible areas of green infrastructure as these would have the capacity to hold a substantial number of street and garden trees which will, over time, contribute to a network of green infrastructure and help to integrate the character of the site with the surrounding landscape.

2.25.2 All landscape mitigation should be subject to a high-quality detailed landscape scheme so as to ensure that the functions of the landscape components will be delivered; this will also reflect positively on the design quality of a proposal as a whole.

2.26 Overview of Green Belt Matters

2.26.1 Previous sections consider the constraints and opportunities of the site and its surrounding landscape context in order to inform the development of a masterplan for the site. This includes consideration of relevant strengths and weaknesses of the site and consequent options for mitigation.

2.26.2 This section considers Green Belt matters in terms of the role and function of the site and its contribution to Green Belt purposes. It also considers how an appropriate Green Belt boundary can be defined using robust and enduring features within the landscape.

2.27 The Site in the Green Belt

2.27.1 As set out in previous sections of this report, it is recognised that Green Belt designation is one of land use control, with policy designed to retain the essential characteristics of Green Belts: their openness and their permanence (NPPF para. 133). Green Belt is not a designation that seeks to protect a landscape of any particular quality or amenity value.

2.27.2 Notwithstanding the differentiation, the PPG on Green Belt (updated July 2019) recognises a connection between landscape and visual matters. The PPG addresses three areas in respect of Green Belt, including factors to be considered for potential impacts on openness, potential for compensatory measures to offset impact of removing land from the Green Belt; and mechanisms for securing such measures. The PPG states that:

"...openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects - in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume..."

2.27.3 The Black Country Green Belt Study rates areas within the Green Belt as to how they contribute to the five purposes of the Green Belt; rates the remaining areas of Green Belt against the harm which would be caused by their removal from the Green Belt to the integrity of the remaining Green Belt; and assesses how far the landscape character of each Green Belt area would be sensitive to development.

2.27.4 The site is identified as parcel B109 and is considered by the study to contribute to the purposes of the Green Belt as follows:

Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating
Strong	Weak/No contribution	Strong	Weak/No Contribution

2.27.5 All parcels are considered to make an equal contribution to Purpose 5 (assist urban

regeneration).

2.27.6 The study goes on to identify the level of harm resulting from the release of parcel 109 from the Green Belt, which in this location is considered to be 'high'. Areas that would result in a 'high' level of harm are defined by the study as follows:

"Where land makes a strong contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and where its release would partially weaken adjacent Green Belt (for example by increasing its containment by urban areas), harm is likely to be high."

2.28 Strategic Analysis

2.28.1 To establish whether the site is suitable for release, it is necessary to understand the 'role or function' in Green Belt terms when considered against landscape and visual issues. This is important because there is an inherent link between the perception of 'openness' and the physical components of a landscape, its character, and views to, from and within a landscape.

2.28.2 The following strategic analysis provides an appraisal of the site's contribution towards Green Belt purposes, as defined by paragraph 134 of the NPPF, in respect of landscape and visual matters.

2.28.3 The analysis considers the potential impact of changes on site in terms of introducing built form and the impact of removing the site from the Green Belt. This is undertaken on the basis of determining to what extent the site can accept residential development without an undue degree of impact on the landscape. Each of the purposes is considered in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Appraisal of the site's contribution to Green Belt purposes

<i>NPPF Purposes of the Green Belt</i>	<i>Summary</i>
<p>To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.</p>	<p>The site is located on the eastern edge of the settlement of Brownhills. An area of which extends as ribbon development along the A461 Lichfield Road, running in parallel with part of the south-eastern boundary.</p> <p>There are a number of built elements already existing in close proximity to the site and which in combination with the existing mature woodland copse in the centre of the site, bear influence on the site and contribute to the definition of the boundary of Brownhills, serving to contain it both physically and visually. Whilst the site does have</p>

	<p>some relationship with the wider countryside to the east (as identified by the Black Country Green Belt Study), development of the site will not lead to unrestricted sprawl of the built-up area as it will be contained within this framework. New woodland and tree belt planting along the eastern boundary will also provide further enclosure.</p> <p>The extent of development will not project built form further into the countryside as it sits directly adjacent to the existing settlement edge and includes new landscape infrastructure planting along its boundaries.</p> <p>The proposals outline the intention to provide strong green infrastructure along the eastern boundaries of the development envelope that will provide a closed edge to the development that extends no further east than the existing settlement along the A461 (Lichfield Road) to the south-east and along the B5011 and the B4155 to the north and north-east. The development will also serve to rationalise in part the existing ribbon development along the A416, Lichfield Road, to better incorporate it into the settlement pattern of Brownhills.</p>
<p>To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.</p>	<p>The closest settlement to the eastern edge of Brownhills is the small village of Stonnall, located ca. 1.2km to the south-east of the site. The ribbon development along the A461 Lichfield Road, lies closer to the village of Stonnall than the proposed development. The next closest settlement is the village of Shenstone that lies ca. 4.45km to the east.</p> <p>Development of the site will represent a relatively small-scale extension on the eastern edge of Brownhills which will not extend further east than the existing settlement pattern. As identified in the Black Country Green Belt Study, the land parcel (of which the site is part) plays a very limited role in maintaining the separation between the West Midlands conurbation and the neighbouring town of Lichfield due to distance.</p> <p>Overall, development of the site will not lead to coalescence ('merging') of neighbouring</p>

	settlements.
<p>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.</p>	<p>Development of the site will result in a small loss of open land in the context of the edge of Brownhills. However, the majority of the existing vegetation will be retained, and together with a robust green infrastructure strategy, development can be located within a comprehensive landscape setting which would be located along, and consistent with, the existing settlement edge.</p> <p>Furthermore, development of the site will not extend the existing settlement edge further east than the alignment of the settlement pattern created by the A461 (Lichfield Road) to the south-east and along the B5011 and the B4155 to the north and north-east. Whilst the site does display some characteristics of the wider countryside to the east as suggested by the Black Country Green Belt Study, the site is also influenced by built development, including large scale agricultural buildings, the residential edge and the well trafficked arterial route (A461). There is no public access on site, nor is there any evidence to suggest informal use of the site for recreation.</p>
<p>To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.</p>	<p>There are no conservation areas within the study area and the closest scheduled monument is the fort located in Shire Oak Park Nature Reserve, ca .1.4km to the south. The park and fort form a local hill characterised by woodland that prevents any visual relationship between it and the site.</p> <p>As set out by the Black Country Green Belt Study, the historic town of Lichfield is too distant to for the land parcel to make more than a weak contribution to this purpose.</p>
<p>To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.</p>	<p>The site is influenced by a number of urbanising features such as the settlement edge of Brownhills; a number of major transport routes and their associated infrastructure, including the M6 Toll road, A461 Lichfield Road and the A5; and existing built form on site.</p>

	<p>It is considered that all areas of Green Belt by their nature and designation should contribute to the recycling of derelict and urban land as Green Belt is generally a prohibitive designation where development is rarely acceptable, thus development is focused into urban areas.</p> <p>As set out in the Black Country Green Belt Study, all land parcels are considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.</p>
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2.29 Openness and Visual Aspects

- 2.29.1 Openness is not defined in the NPPF. It is commonly taken to be “*an absence of development*”. Development is defined under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act as:
- “the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operation in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any building or other land.”
- 2.29.2 It can include built form of many types, functions, styles, scales and merit. It can include engineering operations and infrastructure, including roads, supporting infrastructure such as lighting and signage; and utilities including electricity pylons and line, or telegraph poles and lines. The overall scale and presence/absence of these elements, and how they present themselves in any given part of a Green Belt, serves to generate an understanding of the spatial dimension of openness.
- 2.29.3 Visual connectivity, view corridors, and public views can also contribute to a visual dimension; in terms of what can be seen from specific locations, including public viewpoints, and how this serves to influence the openness of the Green Belt.
- 2.29.4 In the vicinity of the site, the spatial dimension of the openness of the Green Belt is influenced locally by:
- The existing settlement edge, which is more or less prominent to varying degrees, but particularly prominent at locations close to the western boundary of the site and, furthermore, are generally defined by late twentieth century or modern housing development and commercial development of varying scales;
 - The extensive local road infrastructure and the existing ribbon development along the arterial route of the A461 (Lichfield Road) and Chester Road, as well as the presence of the M6 Toll motorway further east;
 - By the landform in the area which is gently undulating and in combination with the local

vegetation framework, serves to help contain the site, in particular the lower parts of it in the centre and north.

- 2.29.5 In the vicinity of the site, the visual dimension is generally enclosed by virtue of the various combinations of landform and vegetation which serve to screen or foreshorten views to the site, in particular the mature woodland blocks and tree belts (in particular along roads), as well as hedgerow and trees present on the site itself and the in the local landscape context.

2.30 Green Belt strategy

- 2.30.1 In accordance with the NPPF, Green Belt boundaries should be defined clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

- 2.30.2 This preliminary 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.

- 2.30.3 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.

- 2.30.4 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.

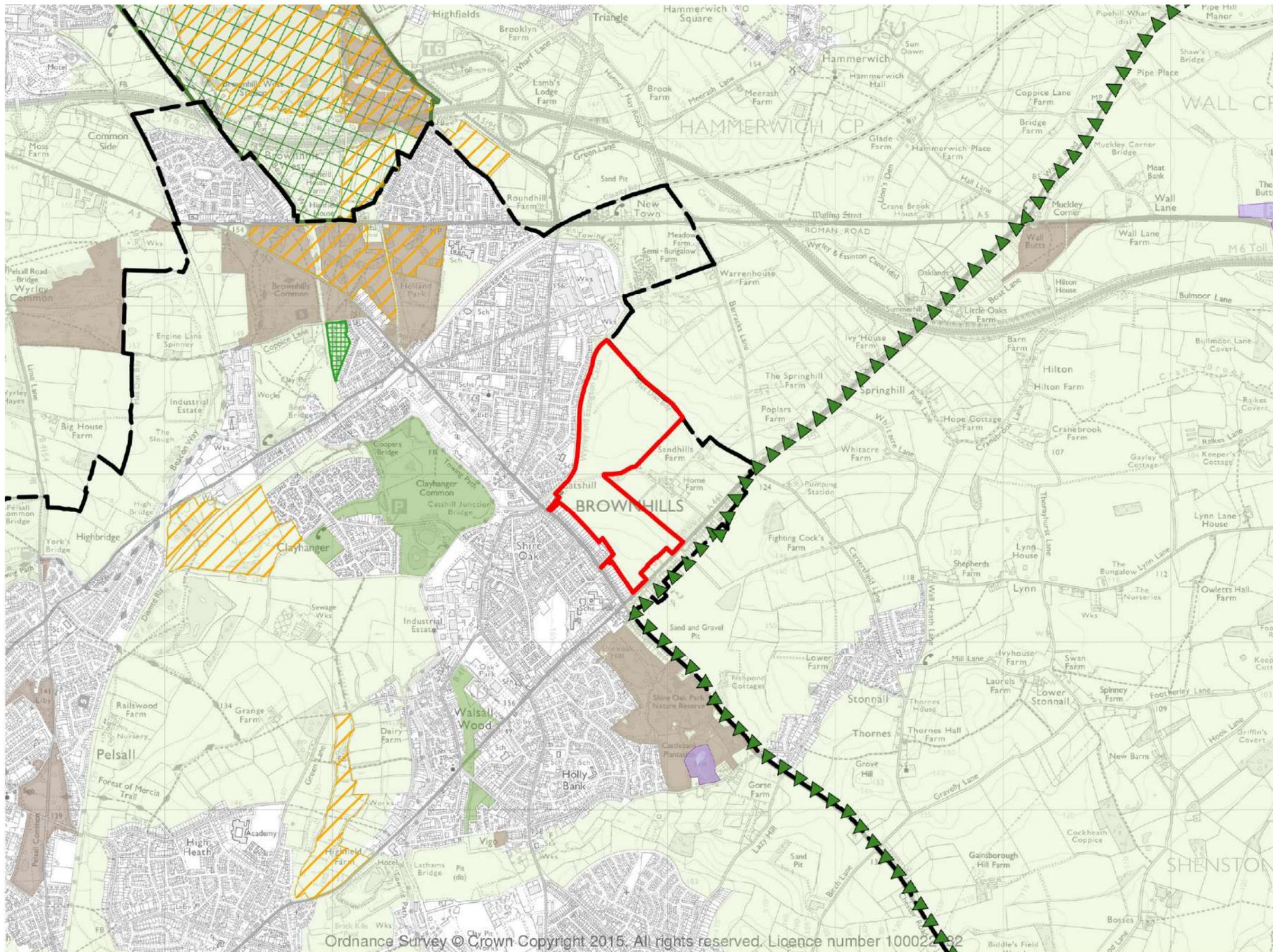
- 2.30.5 These mitigation measure will help to establish and enhance a robust landscaped edge to the proposed development and provide a definitive new Green Belt boundary that also contains new development and helps assimilate it with the character of the landscape in this location.

2.31 Summary

- 2.31.1 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.

- 2.31.2 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
 -  LPA boundary*
 -  Urban Open Space (LC1)*
 -  Green belt**
 -  SSSI**
 -  Ancient Woodland**
 -  Scheduled Monuments**
 -  CROW land**
 -  Country parks**
 -  Forest of Mercia***

Sources:
 * Walsall Council UDP (2005)
 ** www.magic.gov.uk
 *** www.forestry.gov.uk

A- (18/08/2020 NF) Updates to title block
 Revisions:
 First Issue- 09/03/2017 LG

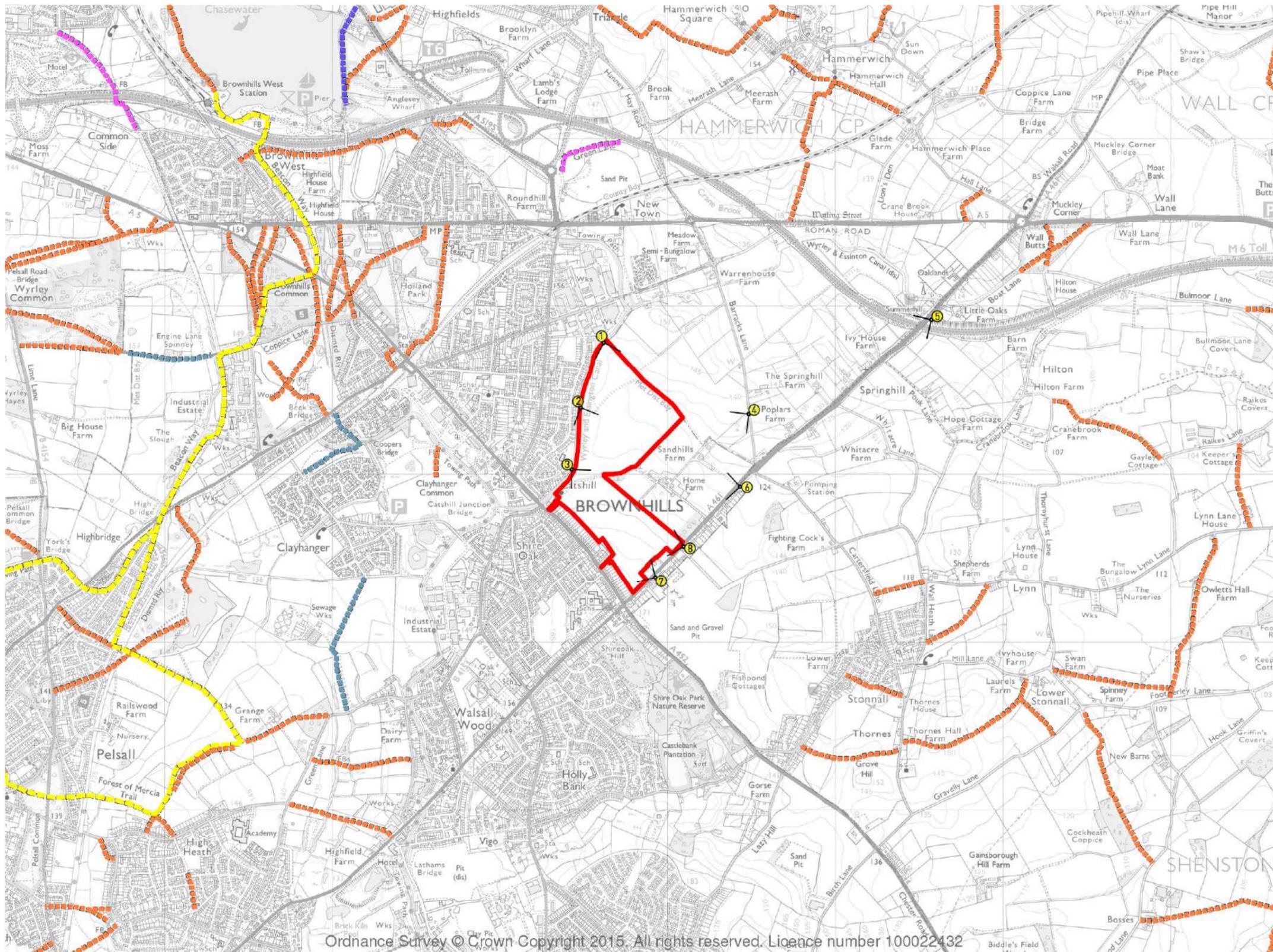
Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright 2015. All rights reserved. Licence number 100022432

Land at Home Farm, Sandhills,
 Walsall

**Fig. 1 Site Location and
 Planning Designations**

Drawing Ref: **BIR.4327_06A**
 Client : L&Q Estates Ltd
 Date : 09/03/2017
 Drawn by : LG
 Checked by : KM
 Scale : 1:25000 @ A3





- KEY**
-  Site boundary
 -  Representative viewpoints
 -  Public footpath
 -  Public bridleway
 -  Byway open to all traffic
 -  Other routes with public access
 -  Recreational route

B- (18/08/2020 NF) Updates to title block and viewpoint locations

Revisions:
First Issue- 09/03/2017 LG

Land at Home Farm, Sandhills, Walsall

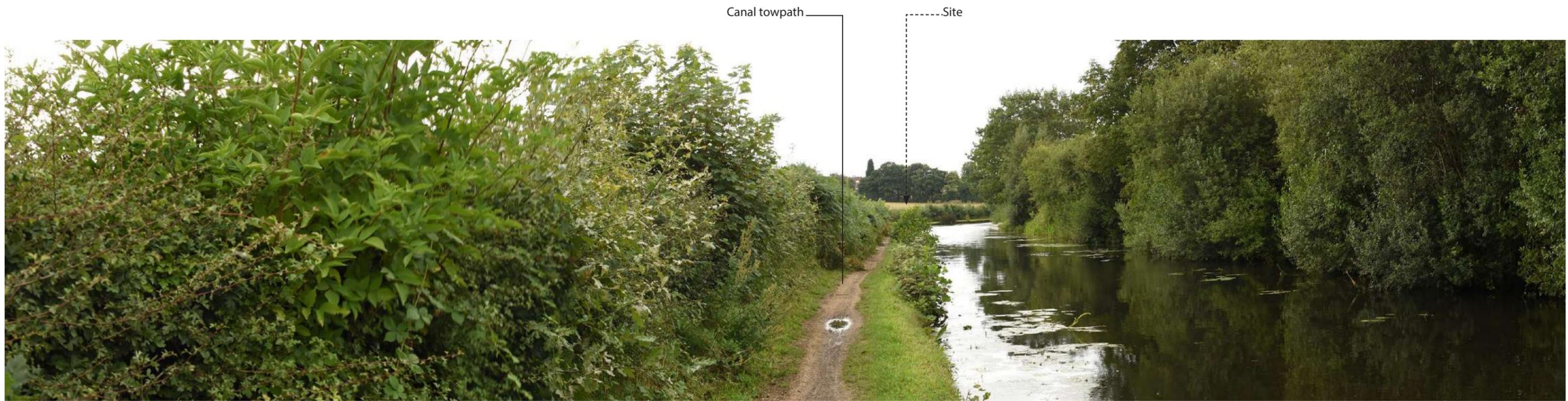
Fig. 2 Viewpoint Locations and Public Rights of Way

Drawing Ref: **BIR4327_07B**
Client : L&Q Estates Ltd
Date : 24/08/2017
Drawn by : NF
Checked by : KM
Scale : 1:25000 @ A3





Viewpoint 1	View from Wyrley and Essington Canal towpath, looking south-west.
Camera type	Nikon D3300 with 50mm lens (equivalent focal length)
Date	18th August 2020
Approx grid ref	SK 05593 05775
Approx elevation	+142m AOD
Distance to site	c. 2m



Viewpoint 2	View from Wyrley and Essington canal towpath, looking south-west.
Camera type	Nikon D3300 with 50mm lens (equivalent focal length)
Date	18th August 2020
Approx grid ref	SK 0547 0541
Approx elevation	+143m AOD
Distance to site	c. 2m

Land at Home Farm, Sandhills, Walsall

Fig. 3: Viewpoint Photographs

Drawing Ref: BIR.4327_07B
Client: L&Q Estates Ltd

Date : 18/08/20
Drawn by : NF
Checked by : KM





Viewpoint 3	View from Wyrley and Essington Canal, looking south-east.
Camera type	Nikon D3300 with 50mm lens (equivalent focal length)
Date	18th August 2020
Approx grid ref	SK 0543 0502
Approx elevation	+145m AOD
Distance to site	c. 2m



Viewpoint 4	View from Barracks Lane, looking west.
Camera type	Nikon D3300 with 50mm lens (equivalent focal length)
Date	18th August 2020
Approx grid ref	SK 0648 0535
Approx elevation	+131m AOD
Distance to site	c. 400m

Land at Home Farm, Sandhills, Walsall

Fig. 3: Viewpoint Photographs

Drawing Ref: BIR.4327_07B
Client: L&Q Estates Ltd

Date : 18/08/20
Drawn by : NF
Checked by : KM



Approximate extent of site

A461 Lichfield Road



Viewpoint 5	View from overbridge (M6 Toll), looking south-west.
Camera type	Nikon D3300 with 50mm lens (equivalent focal length)
Date	18th August 2020
Approx grid ref	SK 0755 0591
Approx elevation	+120m AOD
Distance to site	c. 1.9km

A461 Lichfield Road

Approximate extent of site

Home Farm



Viewpoint 6	View from Lichfield Road (A461), looking north-west.
Camera type	Nikon D3300 with 50mm lens (equivalent focal length)
Date	18th August 2020
Approx grid ref	SK 0641 0492
Approx elevation	+128m AOD
Distance to site	c. 470km

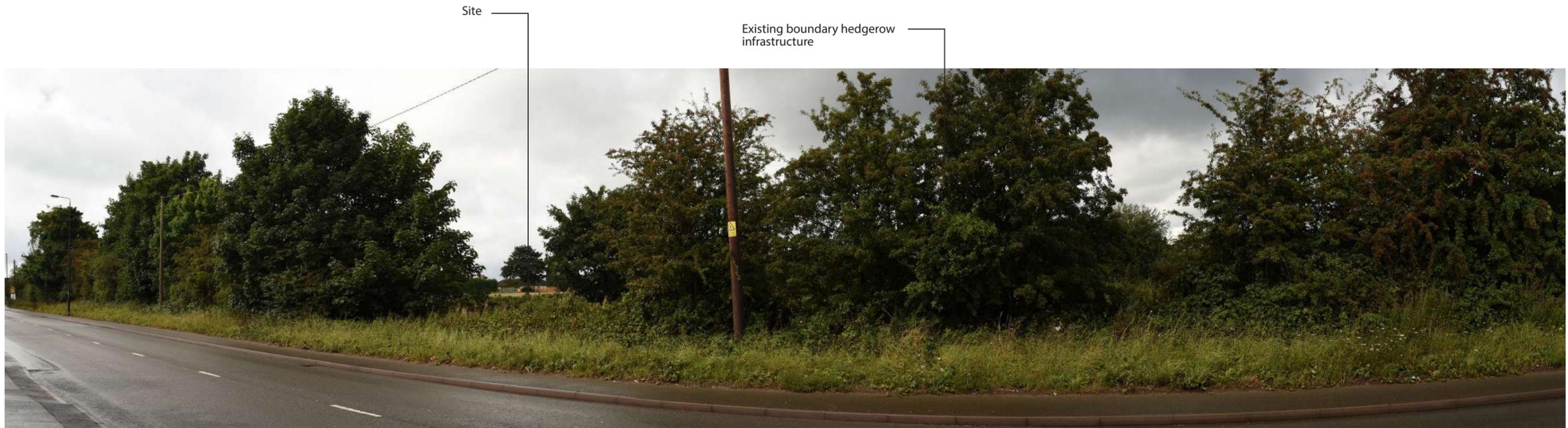
Land at Home Farm, Sandhills, Walsall

Fig. 3: Viewpoint Photographs

Drawing Ref: BIR.4327_07B
Client: L&Q Estates Ltd

Date : 18/08/20
Drawn by : NF
Checked by : KM





Viewpoint 7	View from Lichfield Road (A461), east of Shire Oak, looking north-west.
Camera type	Nikon D3300 with 50mm lens (equivalent focal length)
Date	18th August 2020
Approx grid ref	SK 0590 0438
Approx elevation	+160m AOD
Distance to site	c. 20m



Viewpoint 8	View from Lichfield Road (A461), southern boundary of the site, looking north-west.
Camera type	Nikon D3300 with 50mm lens (equivalent focal length)
Date	18th August 2020
Approx grid ref	SK 0610 0459
Approx elevation	+144m AOD
Distance to site	c. 20m

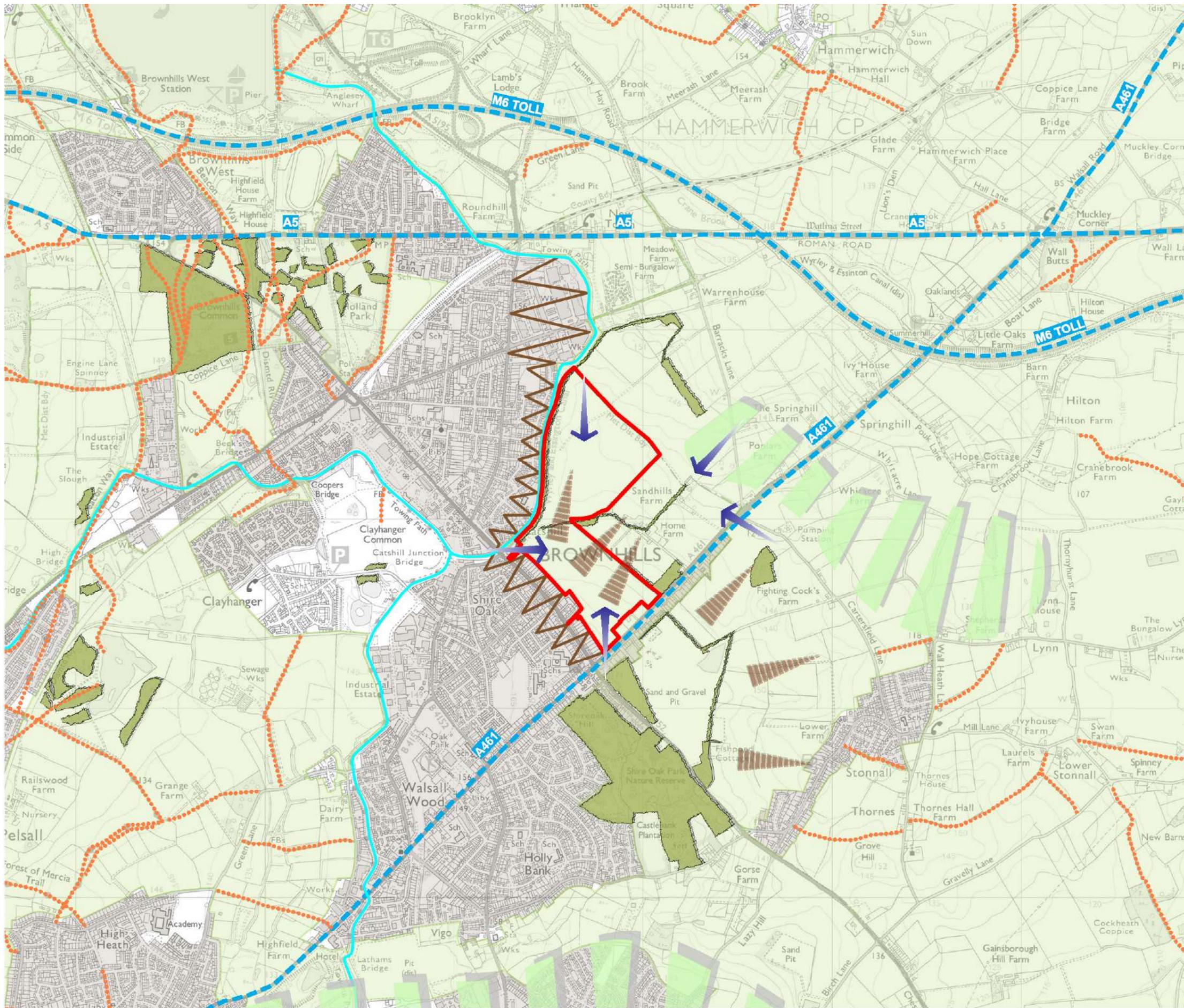
Land at Home Farm, Sandhills, Walsall

Fig. 3: Viewpoint Photographs

Drawing Ref: BIR.4327_07B
Client: L&Q Estates Ltd

Date : 18/08/20
Drawn by : NF
Checked by : KM





- 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

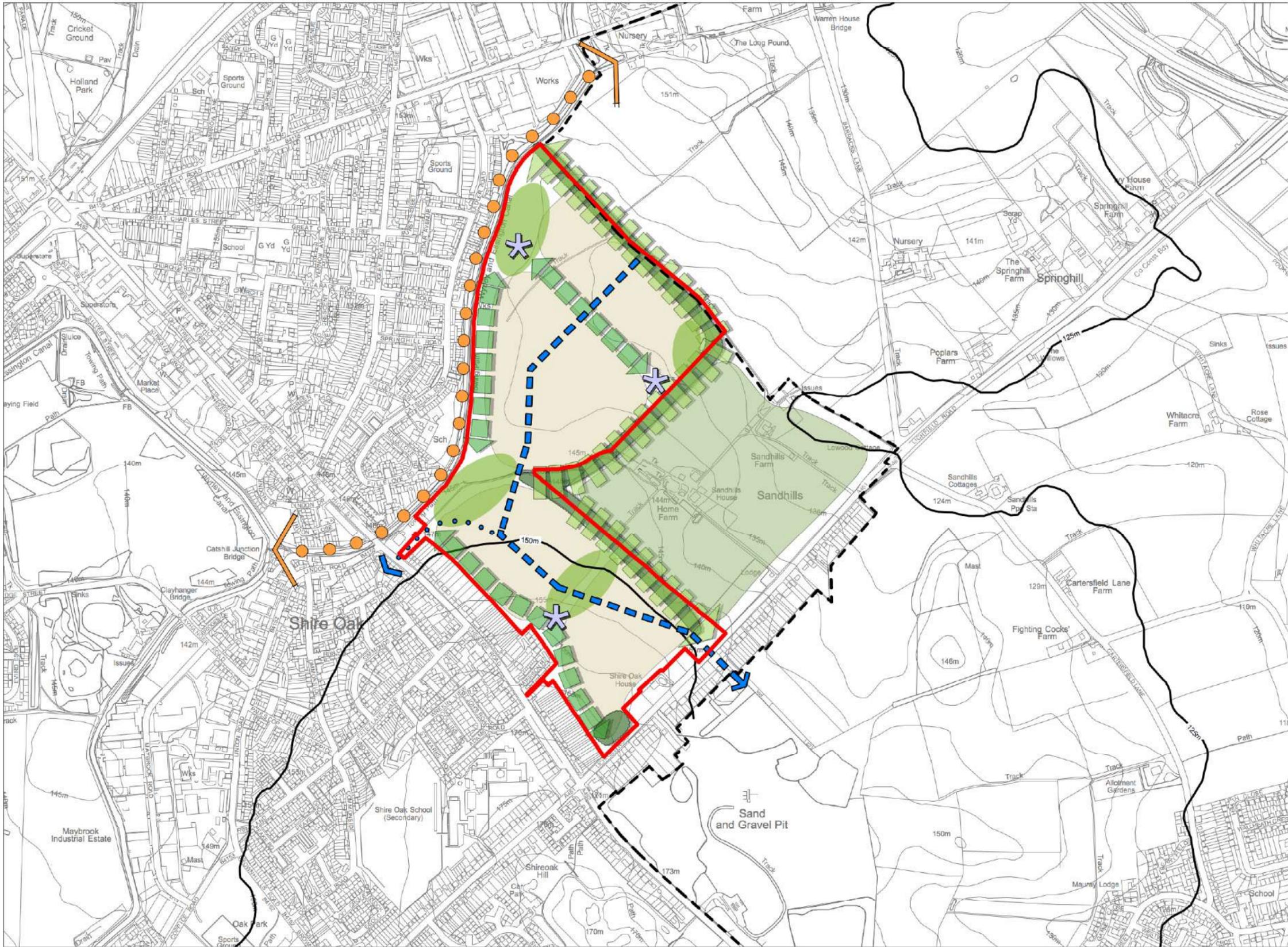
A- (18/08/2020 NF) Updates to title block
 Revisions:
 First Issue- 15/03/2017 JT

Land at Home Farm, Sandhills,
 Walsall

**Fig. 4 Contextual Landscape
 and Visual Analysis**

Drawing Ref: BIR.4327_08A
 Client : L&Q Estates Ltd
 Date : 15/03/2017
 Drawn by : JT
 Checked by : KM
 Scale : 1:20000 @ A3





- 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

A- [18/08/2020 NF] Updates to title block
 Revisions:
 First Issue- 23/03/2017 JT

Land at Home Farm, Sandhills, Walsall

Fig 5. Green Infrastructure Strategy

Drawing Ref: **BIR.4327_09A**
 Client : L&Q Estates Ltd
 Date : 23/03/2017
 Drawn by : JT
 Checked by : KM
 Scale : 1:10000 @ A3



3. Indicative Development Framework

3.1 Masterplan Components

3.1.1 The Illustrative Masterplan, included as the end of this Chapter, works within the parameters identified as part of the landscape and visually led process, and begins to progress some of the design principles. In summary, the process has generated the following statistics in terms of the components and mix of uses within the development framework:

- Up to 1,200 residential dwellings (at approx. 40dph);
- Mixed use local centre (0.5ha);
- Two form entry primary school (1.2ha) plus primary school playing fields/community open space (0.55ha);
- Public open space including landscape buffers and attenuation features (22.6 ha); and
- Land retained as existing use (53 ha) – shown within the blue line boundary.

3.1.2 The proposed development will create housing choice, community facilities and new amenity spaces for the existing and new community whilst improving public access across the site.

3.2 Development Parcels

3.2.1 Four distinct areas of development that are separated by areas of public open space have been defined within the Development Framework Plan. Each of these areas will have their own character but will share common design principles and elements in order to provide a cohesive design response to the scheme. These four areas are as follows:

Parcel 1: Woodland Setting

3.2.2 Located to the south of the development proposals and adjacent to existing woodland planting and tree belts, this area of development provides the entrance feature to the design proposals. It is proposed to provide areas of open space along Lichfield Road and to provide the primary site access through this point. Dwellings will be set behind the landscaped open space. This area will be of lower density, consisting of predominately detached and semi-detached properties to mimic the existing urban form. The proposed dwellings will provide a strong frontage along the route of the primary movement route.

Parcel 2: Community Focal Point

3.2.3 This development area contains a mix of uses including residential, mixed-use local centre and potential primary school. The play areas to serve the school could be integrated with the proposed

Sandhills Common while providing community areas. The central location of this area will provide a community focal point, which would also provide benefit for the existing community. It is intended that this area will contain medium density areas that include a mix of short terraces, semi-detached and smaller units. It is proposed that the Local Centre will be located to the East of the Primary School and will be approximately 0.5 ha.

Parcel 3: Canal Side Development

- 3.2.4 The canal side development is contained within the lower lying levels within the site adjacent to the canal corridor. The “Canalside Walk” has been created between the proposed development envelope and the canal in order to maintain the open aspect of the towpath. Dwellings will front onto the canal side park and incorporate a more landscape dominated environment in order to provide the appropriate transition between the built environment and the area of open space. The house types proposed in this location will be short terraces, semi-detached and detached units within the medium low-density area.

Parcel 4: Urban – Rural Transition

- 3.2.5 The most northern parcel of development creates the transitional area between the built form edge and the adjacent countryside. A new Green Belt boundary is created through the provision of a substantial structural woodland belt and a potential linear swale park. This parcel will be a lower density area to provide an appropriate landscape dominated environment.
- 3.2.6 The development proposals achieve an average density of approximately 40 dwellings per hectare, which accords with Government guidance on ensuring the efficient use of land yet is reflective of the scale of the local area. A variety of house types, tenures and sizes of dwellings are to be provided within the development in order to assist in creating a balanced community as a variety of households can be accommodated.

Site Access

- 3.2.7 Two access points are proposed to serve the development. The primary access point being located via Lichfield Road to the south of the proposed development. The secondary access is located off Chester Road and has the potential to be a bus/emergency access point only. A bus loop is also proposed to serve the development.

4. Transportation

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Mode Transport Planning have been appointed by L&Q Estates to prepare constructive representations setting out the highways and transportation package to support the delivery of circa 1,500 dwellings at Home Farm, Sandhills, north of Walsall.

4.1.2 The site is situated in Brownhills and is bordered to the north by the Wyrley and Essington Canal, to the south by the A461 Lichfield Road, to the east by farmland and to the west by existing residential properties which front onto the A452 Chester Road.

4.2 Planning Policy and Guidance

4.2.1 The delivery of residential development in this location has been considered in relation to relevant transportation policies of the Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS), adopted 2011, and the relevant long-term themes of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3), covering the period of 2011 to 2026.

4.2.2 The key policies from the BCCS, specifically relating to the delivery of new development, are as follows:

- CSP5 – Transport Strategy;
- HOU2 – Housing Density, Type and Accessibility;
- TRAN1 – Priorities for the Development of the Transport Network;
- TRAN2 – Managing Transport Impacts of New Development;
- TRAN4 – Creating Coherent Networks for Cycling and Walking; and
- TRAN5 – Influencing the Demand for Travel and Travel Choices.

4.2.3 The key themes from the West Midlands LTP3, specifically relating to the delivery of new development are as follows:

- Long Term Theme 1: Regeneration, thriving centres, corridors and gateways;
- Long Term Theme 3: Modal Transfer and the Creation of Sustainable Travel Patterns; and
- Long Term Theme 6: Improved Local Accessibility and Connectivity.

4.2.4 The long-term themes of the West Midlands LTP3 aim to reduce reliance on the private car in favour of more sustainable modes of transport for many journey purposes.

- 4.2.5 Any transportation submissions to support a forthcoming planning application would be prepared in line with the Department for Transport's (DfT's) Guidance on Transport Assessment (GTA) with reference to DfT circular 02/2013 (The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development) where traffic impacts are envisaged on the strategic highway network.

4.3 Local Highway Network and Access Options

- 4.3.1 The site is bordered by the A452 Chester Road to the west and the A461 Lichfield Road to the south. The A452 Chester Road and the A461 Lichfield Road form a traffic signal controlled junction at the southern corner of the site.
- 4.3.2 The A461 Lichfield Road provides a linkage to Walsall to the south-west of the site and to the A5 Watling Street to the north-east of the site. The A5 Watling Street links to the M6 toll via junctions T5, T6 and T7, to the M6 at junction 12 and to the M42 at junction 10.
- 4.3.3 The A452 Chester Road provides a linkage into Brownhills and the A5 Watling Street to the north of the site and to Sutton Coldfield, Erdington to the south. The A452 Chester Road also provides linkages to Great Barr and West Bromwich via the A4041 Queslett Road. The A452 Chester Road also links to the M6 at junction 5 and also at junction 6, via the A38 Aston Expressway. The A38 Aston Expressway provides a direct route into the centre of Birmingham.
- 4.3.4 In line with policy TRAN2 of the BCCS the traffic impacts of the development proposals will be considered in relation to existing conditions on the surrounding highway network and where necessary appropriate mitigation measures will be provided to counter any forecast adverse impacts directly attributable to the development proposals.
- 4.3.5 The extent of the off-site highways study area will be agreed in consultation with Walsall Council (WC) and the Highways England (HE) as part of any forthcoming planning application. As an absolute minimum, it is envisaged that the highways impact of the development will need to be considered at the A461 Lichfield Road/A452 Chester Road traffic signal controlled junction.
- 4.3.6 Vehicular access to the site will be provided via two points, the first will be formed with the A452 Chester Road and the second will be formed with the A461 Lichfield Road. Indicative sketch layouts of the site access proposals are shown on drawings **P32-3351-PS-001 Rev A** and **P32- 3351-PS-002 Rev A**.
- 4.3.7 It should be noted that the access drawings (appended) are preliminary in nature and are indicative layouts only; they will ultimately be subject to further assessment and design iterations, subject to consultation with, and approval from, the Local Highway Authority. Further assessment/design of the accesses will be subject to the following:
- Acquisition of highway boundary plans;

- Updated (more recent) traffic survey data; and
- Further consideration of the driveway accesses along Lichfield Road (in vicinity of the proposed signalised junction).

4.3.8 A high-level appraisal of site access junction capacity has been undertaken using average vehicle only trip rates from the TRICS database for houses privately owned situated within the West Midlands region. The calculated trip rates and resultant traffic generated by the development proposals are summarised in **Tables 4.1** and **4.2** below.

Table 4.1: TRICS Trip Rates (per dwelling)

Time Period	Arrivals	Departures	Two-Way
08:00-09:00 (AM Peak)	0.184	0.449	0.633
17:00-18:00 (PM Peak)	0.437	0.265	0.702

Table 4.2: Traffic Generation (1,500 dwellings)

Time Period	Arrivals	Departures	Two-Way
08:00-09:00 (AM Peak)	276	674	950
17:00-18:00 (PM Peak)	656	398	1053

4.3.9 Baseline traffic flows (2009) for the A452 Chester Road and the A461 Lichfield Road have been obtained from Mott MacDonald and these have been growthed to 2023 levels (five years post registration of a planning application, assuming a submission during 2018).

4.3.10 The development traffic has been distributed assuming a 60:40 split between access points, with the bias towards the A461 Lichfield Road access, and proportionally in line with the direction of travel on either the A452 Chester Road or the A461 Lichfield Road, obtained from the Mott MacDonald traffic count data. The results of the analysis are summarised in **Table 4.3** and **Table 4.4**.

Table 4.3: Priority Access with A452 Chester Road – 2023 Base + Development Scenario

Arm	AM Peak		PM Peak	
	RFC	Queue	RFC	Queue
Site Access	0.80	4	0.84	4
A452 Chester Road	0.12	1	0.27	1

Table 4.4: Signal Access with A461 Lichfield Road – 2023 Base + Development Scenario

Arm	AM Peak		PM Peak	
	DoS	Queue	DoS	Queue
Site Access (Left Turn)	70%	6	77%	4
Site Access (Right Turn)	73%	6	81%	5
A461 Lichfield Road (S)	76%	17	84%	22
A461 Lichfield Road (N)	68%	13	69%	10

4.3.11 The results summarised in **Tables 4.3** and **4.4** indicate that both potential site accesses are forecast to work within acceptable capacity parameters.

4.3.12 The access strategy provides a bias towards a main access junction formed with the A461 Lichfield Road. It has also been concluded that given the RFC/DoS forecast for the current access designs options, that should any further development be brought forward, that an additional point of access would likely be required in order to accommodate additional traffic demands.

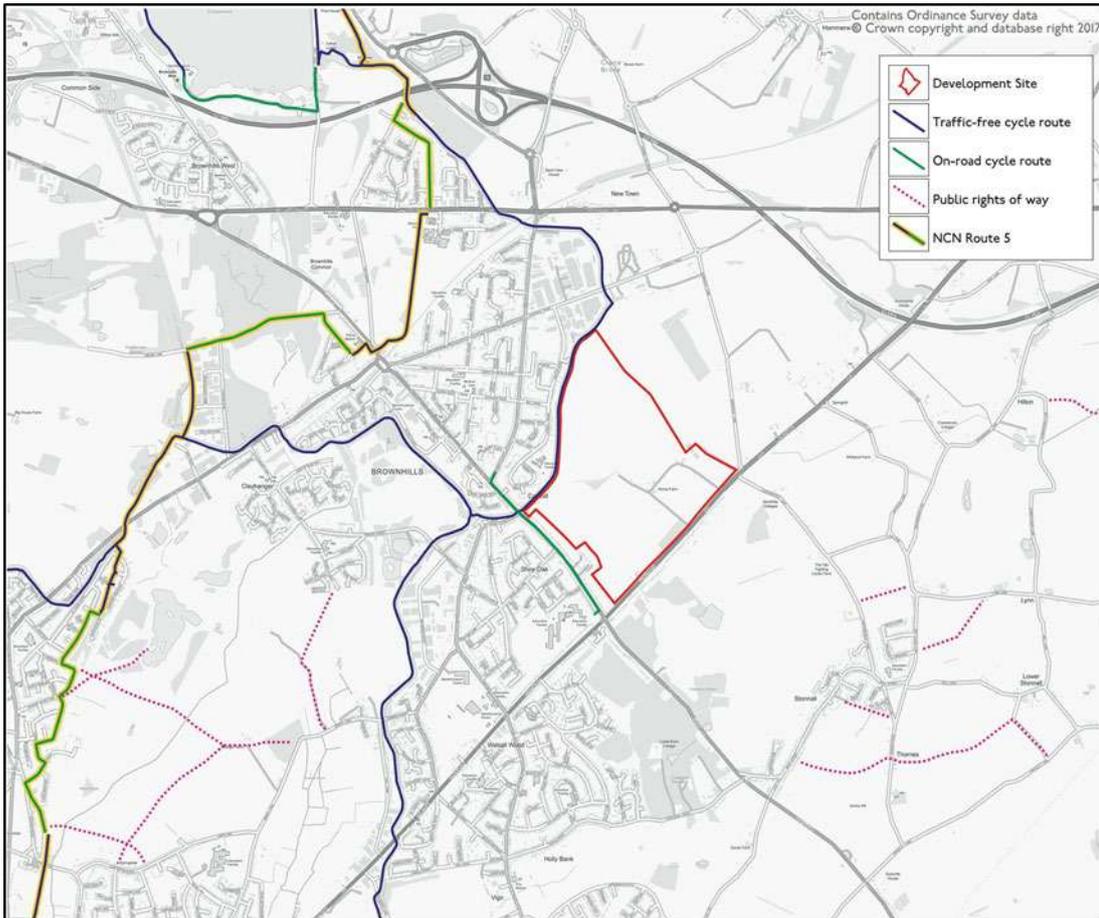
4.3.13 Given the length of available site frontage with the A461 Lichfield Road, it is also considered that a roundabout option may also offer a potential site access solution, subject to further capacity and design checks.

4.4 Sustainable Accessibility

Pedestrian Connectivity

4.4.1 The existing pedestrian and cycle infrastructure network in the area surrounding the site is illustrated on **Figure 4.1** overleaf.

Figure 4.1: Existing Pedestrian & Cycle Facilities



4.4.2 There are no Public Rights of Way (PROW) which cross or abut the site. The A452 Chester Road and A461 Lichfield Road both benefit from existing footways on both sides of the carriageway. These link with other footways on adjoining roads, thereby providing a network of footways throughout the surrounding area.

4.4.3 BCCS policy TRAN1 describes how all new developments will address the transport network and provide adequate access for all modes, including walking, cycling and public transport. BCCS policy TRAN4 also describes how new developments should have good walking and cycling links to public transport nodes and interchanges. The internal highway layout of the development proposals will provide pedestrian facilities that will link with those on the existing highway network surrounding the site. The main trip attractors for those on foot are generally situated to the north and west of the site and accordingly improvements to pedestrian crossing facilities on the A452 Chester Road may be required to facilitate east-west movements.

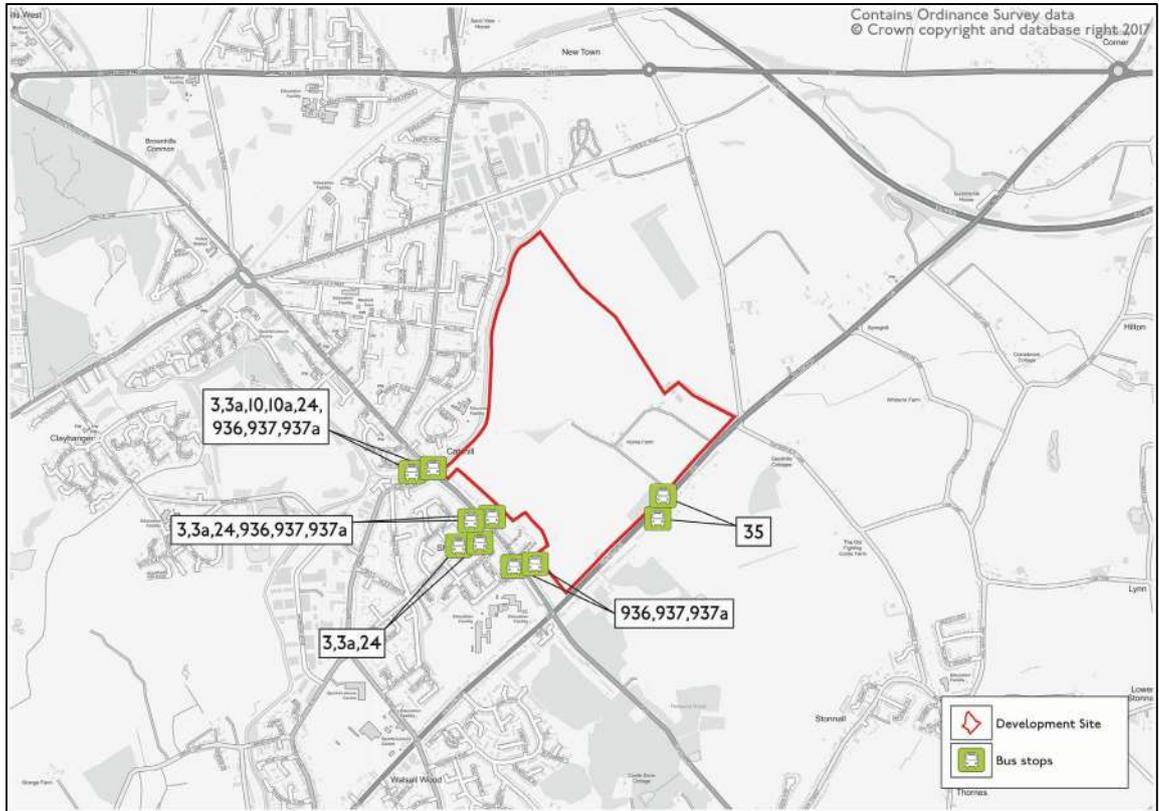
Cycling Connectivity

- 4.4.4 The existing cycle route provision in the area surrounding the site is illustrated on **Figure 4.1**. The nearest cycle route to the site runs along the towpath on the southern side of the Wyrley and Essington Canal. From this route, it is possible to access National Cycle Route 5 when travelling northbound, and routes through Brownhills and Walsall Wood southbound.
- 4.4.5 National Cycle Route 5 is a long-distance cycle route, which routes into Birmingham City Centre, and runs to the extents of Bangor and Reading.
- 4.4.6 BCCS policy TRAN4 describes how new developments should have good walking and cycling links to public transport nodes and interchanges and how all new development should provide cycle parking. The nearest cycle route to the site runs along the towpath on the southern side of the Wyrley and Essington Canal. The canal abuts the northern boundary of the site and presents a key opportunity to provide linkages between the site and the existing cycling network.
- 4.4.7 Within the site boundary primary roads will include shared foot/cycleway facilities with cyclists expected to share the carriageway with other road users on lower order roads.

4.5 Public Transport

- 4.5.1 The nearest bus stops to the site are situated on the A452 Chester Road and the A461 Lichfield Road. These stops are shelter type bus stops and benefit from timetable information. The stops on the A452 Chester Road nearest to the proposed site access point serve the 3/3a, 10/10a, 24, 936 and the 937/937a services. The stops on the A461 Lichfield Road additionally serve the service number 35.
- 4.5.2 The service numbers 3/3a, 10/10A, 24, 35, 936, 937/937a operate within the vicinity of the site; **Figure 4.2**, overleaf, illustrates the location of bus stops and services that stop within close proximity, ultimately serving the site.

Figure 4.2: Bus Service Accessibility



4.5.3 The frequencies of these bus services are summarised in **Table 4.5**.

Table 4.5: Summary of Bus Service Frequency

No.	Bus Route	Frequency	
		Mon-Sat	Sunday
3/3a	Cannock - Brownhills - Walsall	4 per hour	Hourly
10/10a	Walsall - Burntwood via Brownhills	Every 20mins	Every 20mins
24	Catshill - Walsall Wood via Brownhills	Hourly	No Service
35/35a	Walsall - Lichfield via Aldridge, Druids Heath	Hourly	Hourly
936	Birmingham, Lower Bull Street - Brownhills West	Every 20mins (AM&PM)	No Service
937	Birmingham - Brownhills via Kingstanding	Every 30mins	No Service
937a	Birmingham, Lower Bull Street - Brownhills	Hourly (PM)	Hourly

- 4.5.4 The level of combined bus service frequency in the area immediately surrounding the site is high and it is not considered to be necessary to provide increased service frequencies as a result of the development proposals. Any required improvements would simply serve to increase accessibility to bus services for all dwellings. Opportunity exists to explore the diversion of existing bus services into the site using a diversionary loop in order to deliver this.
- 4.5.5 There is opportunity to bring forward smaller parcels of development via a single point of access without investment in significant volumes of public transport infrastructure given that bus services already run along both the A461 Lichfield Road and the A452 Chester Road. This would likely involve relocation of existing bus stops in order to maximise accessibility to the development proposals.
- 4.5.6 The nearest railway stations to the site are Walsall Railway Station and Shenstone Railway Station, which are approximately 4.6 miles southeast and approximately 2.45 miles east of the site, respectively. Many of the bus services operating within the vicinity of the site also stop at St Paul's Bus Station in Walsall, which is a short three to four-minute walk to Walsall Railway Station; providing an opportunity to change between modes.
- 4.5.7 From these railway stations, it is possible to access Birmingham New Street directly on a frequency of every 15-minutes from Walsall railway station, and approximately every 20-minutes from Shenstone railway station. From Birmingham New Street, it is possible to travel onwards towards major UK destinations such as London, Glasgow and Cardiff including other destinations en-route.
- 4.5.8 It is possible also to access Walsall Railway Station via NCN route 5 (an approximate 30-minute cycle), which can be accessed from the site via the Wyrley and Essington Canal Cycle route, enabling travel between the site and the local railway stations possible via a range of modes of transport.
- 4.5.9 Walsall Railway Station does not have a car park, however does have 10 cycle storage spaces. Shenstone Railway Station has 20 car parking spaces, with 2 accessible spaces available for blue badge holders. It does not currently have any cycle storage spaces available.

4.6 Local Amenities

- 4.6.1 Policy TRAN2 of the BCCS sets out accessibility standards for new development, highlighting particular amenities and desirable journey time distances to them via walking/public transport.
- 4.6.2 For the purposes of this analysis we have assumed that the development will have a density of between 35-45 dwellings per hectare, will provide less than 25% flats and will provide a high amount of housing suited to families. Those amenities of interest

and the indicative journey times to them are summarised in **Table 4.6**.

Table 4.6 Summary of BCCS Accessibility Standards

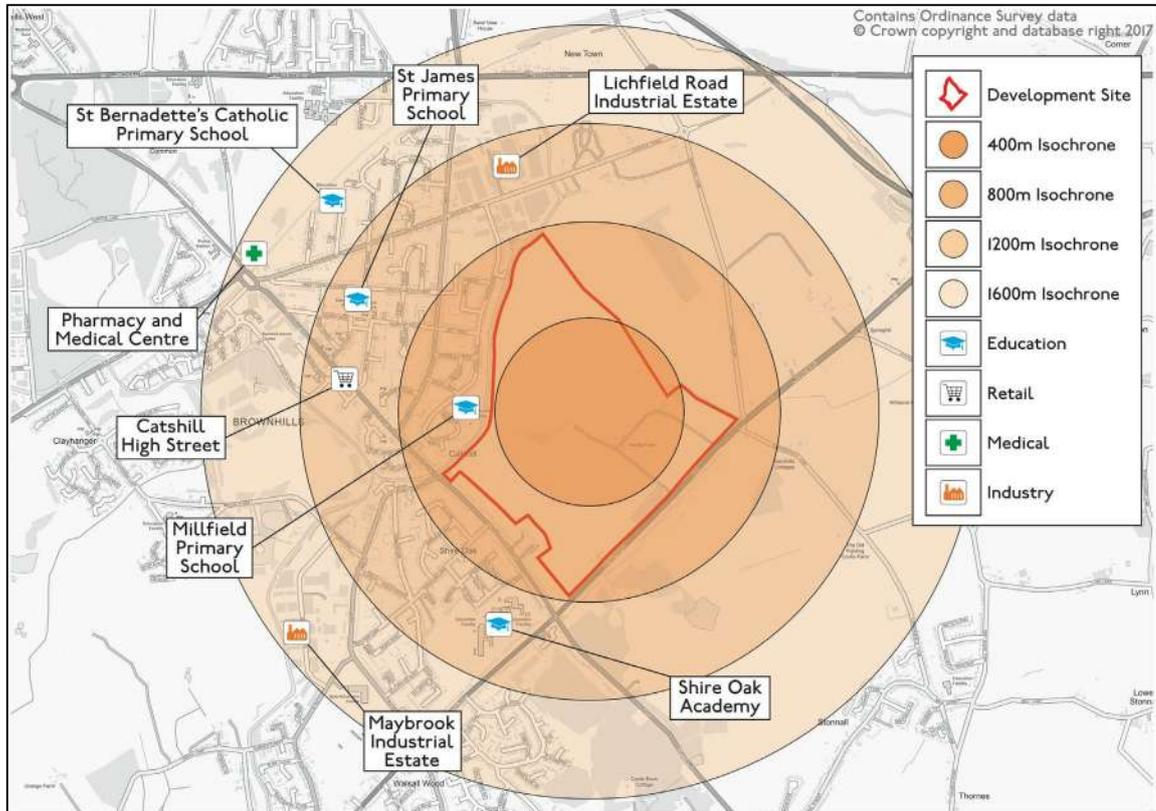
Land Use	Accessibility
Employment – Strategic Centre or other Employment Centre	30 mins (walk/public transport)
Health – Doctors Surgery or Walk-in Centre	15 mins (walk/public transport)
Fresh Food – Centre or Food Store	15 mins (walk/public transport)
Education – Primary School	10 mins (walk only)
Education – Secondary School	20 mins (walk/public transport)

4.6.3 **Figure 4.3**, overleaf, illustrates key local amenities and employment areas plotted in relation to concentric isochrones representing 400m, 800m, 1,200m and 1600m journey distances radiating from the site. These isochrones represent approximate journey times from the site for those on foot where 400m represents a five-minute journey on foot, 800m represents a ten-minute journey on foot and 1,200m represents a 15-minute journey on foot and 1,600m represents a 20-minute journey on foot. The 1,200m isochrones also represents an approximate 5-minute journey by bicycle.

4.6.4 The isochrones show that many local amenities are accessible within reasonable walking and cycling distances from the site including:

- Schools – Millfield Primary School, St James’ Primary School, St Bernadette’s Catholic Primary School, Shire Oak Academy;
- Pharmacies/Medical Centres – The Park View Centre;
- High Street – Catshill High Street; and
- Employment – Lichfield Road Industrial Estate, Maybrook Industrial Estate.

Figure 4.3: Walking Isochrones & Key Amenities



4.6.5 Walsall town centre is also located 4.6 miles southwest of the site’s vicinity; with the town centre containing a wide array of amenities ranging from supermarkets to public houses.

4.6.6 Walsall Bus Service Map also indicates that a variety of bus services run past, or close to these local amenities, thereby making access to amenities possible by a range of modes of transport.

4.6.7 **Figure 4.3** shows that many of the core amenities specified in the BCCS are within acceptable walking distances to/from the site. The level of bus accessibility from the site is good and would provide improved journey times to many facilities. Public transport journey time modelling will be undertaken (using VISOGRAPHY or similar) to support the development proposals as part of a planning application and to demonstrate the level of accessibility to key amenities afforded by public transport.

4.7 Travel planning and smarter choices

4.7.1 Policy TRAN5 of the WCCS considers influencing the demand for travel and travel choices. Specifically, in relation to new development the use of maximum parking standards in conjunction with promoting and implementing smarter choices to help to reduce the need to travel are discussed. Policy CSP5 also supports this stance.

4.7.2 Accordingly, the development proposals will be supported by a robust Travel Plan that will seek to promote alternatives to the use of the private car. The Travel Plan will be prepared in line with the following national best practice policy documents:

- DfT – *Making Residential Travel Plans Work* (2005); and
- DCLG/DfT – *Good Practice Guidance: Delivering Travel Plans through the Planning Process* (2009).

4.7.4 The existing modal shift for journeys to work from Aldridge North and Walsall Wood ward as surveyed in the 2011 Census is summarised in **Table 4.7**. The development proposals would be expected to attract a similar if not better level of sustainable transport use for journeys to work as part of the Travel Plan proposals.

Table 4.7: Summary of Existing Modal Shift (Aldridge North and Walsall Wood Ward)

Mode of Transport	Modal Split (%)
Work Mainly at or from Home	3.96%
Underground, Metro, Light Rail, Tram	0.05%
Train	0.93%
Bus, Minibus or Coach	7.33%
Taxi	0.20%
Motorcycle, Scooter or Moped	0.50%
Driving a Car/Van	73.93%
Passenger in a Car/Van	5.75%
Bicycle	1.22%
On Foot	5.77%
Other Method of Travel to Work	0.37%
Total	100.00%

Source: www.neighbourhoodstatistics.co.uk

4.8 Summary of Discussions with Walsall MBC

4.8.1 A meeting was held at Walsall Council (WC) offices on 13th December 2013: with Kevin Gannon, David Burrows and Steve Griffiths, in summary:

- WBC welcomed the opportunity to see this initial transportation work undertaken;
- Not aware of other sites at this scale currently been promoted within Walsall;
- Historically smaller developments have come forward in recent years;
- A larger development was seen favorably at a high level (for its ability to contribute positively to highways mitigation);
- Access was generally deemed acceptable for the level of development; however, expressed that the main site access on A461 may require new traffic signals;
- Main concern was the existing A461 capacity from the site into Walsall;
- Hence, we discussed linking signals (they are currently not linked) to aid platooning vehicle movement and hence free up capacity; and
- A strategy heavily based upon public transport and sustainable access will be key to delivering this development.

4.8.2 Further to the above, and more recently (*August 2017*), Walsall Council are currently undertaking an improvement scheme along the A461 Lichfield Road; the overall scheme aims to address the issues of growing congestion and capacity along this strategic route.

4.8.3 The scheme targets two key locations, including the A461 Lichfield Road/B4152 Salter's Road junction and the A461 Lichfield Road/A452 Chester Road (Shire Oak); both locations will be widened to increase capacity, they will benefit from new and improved pedestrian facilities and new traffic signals/communications technology will be introduced to improve efficiency and operation.

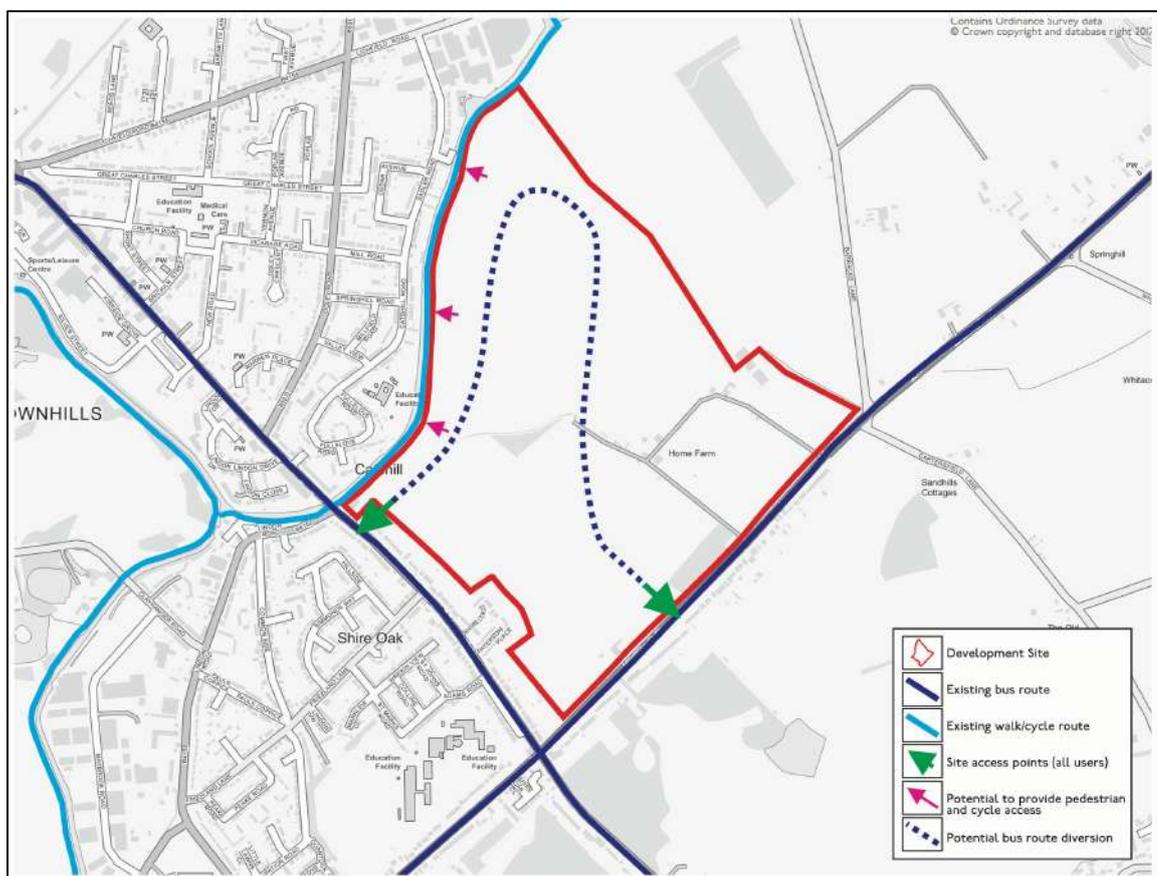
4.8.4 The proposed site access on Lichfield Road (signals) could potentially be incorporated within the network approach now being carried out by WCC; this could be achieved through various traffic signal management methods and optimisation techniques.

4.9 Summary

4.9.1 In summary, it is considered that the site can be delivered in line with the aforementioned improvement scheme and other site-specific infrastructure requirements to enhance accessibility and sustainability. The site-specific improvements are listed below, and are also illustrated on **Figure 4.4**:

- New site access formed with A452 Chester Road;
- New site access formed with A461 Lichfield Road;
- Linkages to the existing foot/cycleway running alongside the Wyrley and Essington Canal; and
- Diversion of existing bus to serve the site via a loop arrangement; including provision of high specification bus stop infrastructure.

Figure 4.4: Proposed Site Connectivity Plan



4.9.2 A Travel Plan would set out objectives, aims, targets, measures and a monitoring framework would ensure that the site is accessible for all modes of transport and as sustainable as possible.

4.9.3 There may be more off-site highway works required in order to mitigate development impacts at key junction locations/corridors, and these would be explored as part of a planning application.



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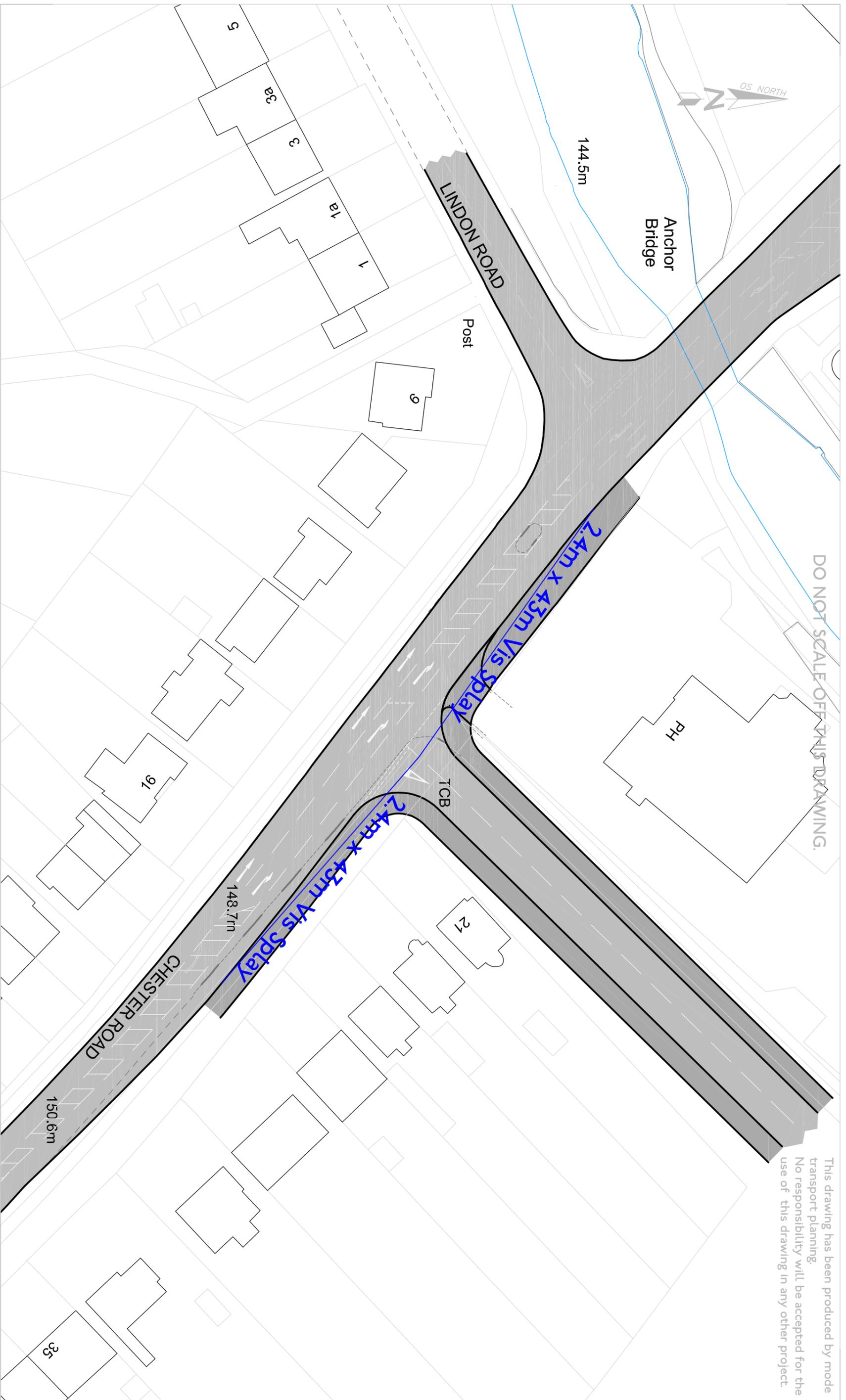


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drawing title		Lichfield Road Signalised Junction Access Design	
client		Gallagher Estates	
job title		Home Farm, Sand Hills, Walsall	
mode transport planning		Lombard House 145 Great Charles Street Birmingham B3 3LP	
mode transport planning		0121 794 8390 info@modetransport.co.uk www.modetransport.co.uk	
scale	1:500@A3	created	Sept 17
drawn	JL	checked	bdf
drawing no.	A	07-09-17	Issued
drawing no.	P32-3351-PS-001		

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drawing title		client		mode transport planning		scale		drawing no.	
Priority Junction Access Design - Chester Road		Gallagher Estates		Lombard House 145 Great Charles Street Birmingham B3 3LP		1:500@A3		P32-3351-PS-002	
job title		mode transport planning		drawn		checked		A	
Home Farm, Sand Hills, Walsall		transport planning		jwm		bdf		07-09-17	
		t 0121 794 8390 e info@modetransport.co.uk w www.modetransport.co.uk		created		Sept 17		Issued	

5. Ecology

5.1 Background

- 5.1.1 Aspect Ecology has been appointed to advise L&Q Estates in respect of ecological matters relating to promotion of land at Home Farm, Sandhills, Walsall through the Review of the Black Country Plan.
- 5.1.2 An extended Phase 1 Habitat survey of the site was conducted in December 2013, to record main habitat types and species, identify areas of ecological interest, and provide an assessment of the potential use of the site by faunal species. A desktop study was also undertaken to source known records of protected or notable species and details of local site designations. This desktop study has since been updated in October 2015 to ensure background information is up to date.
- 5.1.3 This note provides a summary of the survey findings with regard to promotion of the land through the emerging plan making process, providing an overview of ecological issues with a focus on potential constraints and opportunities and overall ecological deliverability of the proposed allocation.

5.2 Site Description

- 5.2.1 The site comprises an 'L' shaped area of land to the north and east of Home Farm, Sandhills, located to the east of Brownhills in Walsall. The site is bordered by residential properties associated with Chester Road (A452) to the west, the Wyrley and Essington Canal to the north, and Lichfield Road (A461) to the south. Home Farm and associated farm buildings, residential properties and surrounding farmland lie to the east, excluded from the site itself but included as part of the wider survey area.
- 5.2.2 The site itself is dominated by arable farmland with a number of hedgerows and treelines at its margins. A track also runs through the middle of the site from Chester Road to the west to Home Farm, along which a small woodland area is located.

5.3 Ecological Baseline Conditions

Ecological Designations

- 5.3.1 Desktop study information received from the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) online database, Staffordshire Ecological Record and EcoRecord indicate that the site is not subject to any statutory nature conservation designations.
- 5.3.2 However, information returned from EcoRecord identifies part of the site as a Potential Site of Importance (PSI), namely Sandhills Arm Canal PSI, which includes the small woodland area and associated hedgerow along the track which divides the site. PSIs are sites that potentially contain

areas of important semi-natural habitat but currently fall outside of the Local Site system. The PSI is described as “former canal arm, now infilled, and triangular block of woodland depicted on historic map (1st ed OS map 1880s)”.

- 5.3.3 Wyrley and Essington Canal, forming the northern boundary of the site, is also subject to non-statutory designation as a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC). The SLINC is designated for its generally good quality water conditions supporting a diverse aquatic flora.
- 5.3.4 A number of ecological designations are also located within the surrounds of the site, as shown on Plan 3586/BN1 contained at the end of this Chapter.
- 5.3.5 The nearest statutory designation is Shire Oak Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR) located 200m to the south of the site. This comprises an old sand and gravel quarry supporting lowland heathland, grassland, woodland and pond habitats.
- 5.3.6 A number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are located within the wider surrounds of the site, the nearest being Chasewater and the Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI, located approximately 1250m to the north of the site. The SSSI is designated for its heath, fen and standing open water habitats, supporting two nationally scarce vascular plant species.
- 5.3.7 A number of European designations are also located within the wider surrounds of the site including Cannock Extension Canal Special Area of Conservation (SAC) 3.3km to the west of the site and Cannock Chase SAC 9.8km to the north of the site.

Habitats

- 5.3.8 A plan of habitat types and features within the site and wider survey area is provided at Plan 3586/BN2, contained at the end of this Chapter.
- 5.3.9 The site is dominated by arable farmland under cultivation for a range of crop types at the time of survey. This appears to be relatively intensively farmed with few arable weeds evident, and is largely open in nature with few hedgerows or other boundary features. Aside from a small area sown with a wild bird seed mixture (see below), the farmland also lacked areas of set aside or field margins at the time of survey. As such, the arable farmland is considered to provide limited opportunities for wildlife, and is of low ecological value at a local level.
- 5.3.10 Habitats of elevated value are generally limited to the margins of the site, and include:
- *Woodland* – a small woodland copse is present along the track which bisects the site (forming part of Sandhills Arm Canal PSI). This supports numerous semi-mature to mature trees, likely planted in origin, with species including frequent Sycamore and occasional Beech, Oak and Pine.

A moderate understorey of Holly and young Sycamore is present, although ground flora is very species poor, dominated by Ivy with occasional Common Nettle and Bramble. Based on its poor diversity of species and the lack of an established woodland flora, the woodland is not considered to be of high importance, although provides some value in association with the treelines and hedgerows as an area of wooded habitat within an otherwise open landscape.

- *Hedgerows and treelines* – several hedgerows and treelines are present at the boundaries of the site. These are species-poor, although are generally intact, offering value in terms of wildlife habitat and connectivity around the margins of the site. Occasional standard trees are present along the hedgerows, and established treelines occur in the southern part of the site, largely dominated by Pine and Sycamore.
- *Wild bird seed plot* – a small area in the south of the site was sown with a wild bird seed mixture at the time of survey, comprising a grass dominated sward with frequent pea and cabbage species. This area provides some interest as a foraging resource for farmland birds, although given its recently established nature, is not of any particular ecological value.

5.3.11 Further habitats of elevated value occur within the wider survey area, including established treelines with some notable mature trees, additional woodland areas, and an area of grass pasture with scattered mature trees. The offsite canal to the north of the site also provides a valuable wildlife corridor, with areas of emergent vegetation and associated tree and scrub habitats.

Fauna

5.3.12 The majority of the site is of limited value for faunal species, being dominated by arable farmland with few boundary habitats or areas of ground cover providing shelter or nesting opportunities. Nevertheless, some potential exists for farmland species, whilst boundary habitats provide potential opportunities for a wider range of faunal species. A discussion of potential opportunities for faunal species is given below:

- *Bats* – roosting opportunities are largely absent from the main part of the site, although a small number of trees within the woodland and along boundary treelines were noted to have developed features such as rot holes and splits which may offer bat roosting potential, whilst offsite farm buildings also offer potential roosting habitat. Boundary features (notably along the offsite canal) are also likely to provide habitat for foraging and commuting bats, including species such as Noctule, Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Whiskered Bat for which records were returned as part of the desktop study. The main part of the site however, being dominated by arable farmland, is unlikely to support any significant bat activity.
- *Badger* – A record of a Badger sett was returned from EcoRecord as part of the desktop study, located along the offsite canal to the north of the site. However, no evidence of this species was recorded within the site during the field survey.
- *Other mammals* – No evidence of any other protected or notable mammal species was recorded during the field survey and generally the site is considered to provide few opportunities for such

species being dominated by arable farmland with few areas of wooded vegetation. Some potential occurs for species favouring open farmland such as the UK BAP species Brown Hare, although no sightings of this species were made during the field survey. The offsite canal provides potential habitat for riparian species including Water Vole (for which records were returned as part of the desktop study) and Otter.

- *Birds* – the site is likely to provide some interest for farmland bird species, with species recorded during the field survey including UK BAP and Red listed¹ House Sparrow, Linnet and Starling. However, nesting habitats are largely limited to the boundaries of the site (aside from ground nesting species such as Skylark), whilst a lack of associated field margins or extensive areas of set aside mean that the site is unlikely to support any significant bird interest.
- *Reptiles* – the site is dominated by arable farmland with no substantial areas of rough vegetation, providing unsuitable habitat for reptile species.
- *Amphibians* – a pond is shown on OS mapping close to Home Farm, approximately 160m from the site boundary. However, this was noted to be dry at the time of survey, and is understood to be a temporary drainage feature (see Plan 3586/BN2). The next nearest waterbody is a large lake within a sand and gravel pit 380m to the south of the site. Given the separation from the site by residential housing and a main road, it is unlikely there would be any significant movement of amphibians between this waterbody and the site, particularly given the low suitability of terrestrial habitat within the site (being dominated by arable farmland). As such, this species group is not considered to form a constraint at the site.
- *Invertebrates* – the site is generally considered to be of low value for invertebrate species, being dominated by arable farmland. Wooded vegetation provides some elevated potential for this species group, although such habitats are generally limited to the site margins.

5.4 Constraints and Opportunities

- 5.4.1 The survey work undertaken has found the site to be largely unconstrained in respect of ecology. However, a number of minor constraints have been identified, including presence of nearby ecological designations, boundary habitats of elevated value, and potential opportunities for a number of protected and notable faunal species. A discussion of these potential constraints is given below in relation to any future proposed development, together with consideration of any required actions or mitigation. Potential opportunities for ecological enhancement in accordance with national and local policy are also identified.

Ecological Designations

¹ RSPB (2009) 'The population status of birds in the UK - Birds of Conservation Concern: 2009'

- 5.4.2 With the exception of Sandhills Arm Canal PSI and Wyrley and Essington Canal SLINC, all ecological designations are well separated from the site and are unlikely to be subject to any direct effects as a result of the proposed development. Some potential exists for increases in recreational use, although nearby designations such as Shire Oak Park LNR are managed to accommodate recreational use, whilst there is unlikely to be any significant increase in recreational pressure at more distant designations.
- 5.4.3 In regard to European designations, the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the Black Country Joint Core Strategy², identifies some uncertainty in regard to effects on Cannock Chase SAC as a result of air pollution and recreational pressure and disturbance, and Humber Estuary cSAC, SPA and Ramsar and Severn Estuary cSAC, SPA and Ramsar as a result of water quality and water supply. Preliminary work undertaken by Walsall Council as part of the HRA process to inform the emerging Site Allocations Document has narrowed these issues further, to Cannock Chase SAC only, although an agreed approach in regard to this designation is yet to be established. As such, it will be necessary for the approach in regard to Cannock Chase SAC to be confirmed at an appropriate stage, although given the separation between the site and this designation (beyond an 8km zone of influence) and available options for mitigation if required (e.g. provision of open space to offset increases in recreational pressure), it is considered likely that any potential issues can be addressed.
- 5.4.4 In regard to Sandhills Arm Canal PSI, this can readily be retained under the proposals together with an appropriate buffer of open space. Road access may be required across the hedgerow which forms the western part of the PSI, although subject to sensitive road design and new planting, this could be achieved with minimal loss of connectivity. Furthermore, long-term management of habitats within the PSI and provision of improved wildlife connectivity through new landscape planting and habitat creation would provide benefits under the proposals.
- 5.4.5 Wyrley and Essington Canal SLINC is separated from the site by a tow path and hedgerow, ensuring no direct disturbance or damage to bankside habitat. Under the proposals, there is an opportunity to create an area of open space alongside the canal, forming a buffer to the proposed development, whilst implementation of an appropriate drainage and pollution control strategy would avoid adverse effects as a result of surface water runoff. As such, subject to implementation of appropriate mitigation, it is considered that this designation can be fully safeguarded under the proposals.

² UE Associates (2010) *'Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Black Country Joint Core Strategy: Appropriate Assessment Report'*

Habitats

- 5.4.6 The site is dominated by arable farmland of low ecological value, not considered to form a constraint to the proposed development, whilst habitats of elevated value including hedgerows, treelines and woodland are mostly restricted to the site margins, allowing them to be readily retained under the proposals. Some minor losses of hedgerow habitat may be required to accommodate road access, although given the species-poor nature of the hedgerows at the site, this is unlikely to constitute a significant impact.
- 5.4.7 Under the proposals, there are significant opportunities to deliver ecological benefits through new habitat creation and enhancement of existing habitats. Such enhancements could include the following:
- As discussed above in relation to ecological designations, there is an opportunity to create an area of open space adjacent to the offsite canal. This could incorporate a range of wooded, grassland and wetland habitats (such as wet scrapes and ponds), forming additional habitat for species associated with the canal such as waterfowl and bats, and strengthening the function of the canal as a wildlife corridor;
 - Native tree and shrub planting within areas of open space and around the perimeters of the built development, providing new wildlife habitat and contributing to the habitat linkage provided by existing woodlands and hedgerows.
 - Provision of wildflower grassland margins along hedgerows and woodland edges;
 - Specific measures to benefit farmland bird species such as wild bird cover plots and scrub creation;
 - Enhancement of existing woodlands/hedgerows through sensitive management in accordance with ecological principles.

Fauna

- 5.4.8 The site generally provides few opportunities for wildlife, and is unlikely to be subject to any significant constraints in regard to protected or notable species. However, habitats at the site provide some potential for species including bats, Badger, Brown Hare and farmland birds, and as such these species will require consideration at an appropriate stage. Further detail is given below:
- *Bats* – boundary features such as hedgerows and the offsite canal provide potential habitat for foraging and commuting bats, and consideration will need to be given to treatment of these boundary habitats to ensure suitable habitat for bats is maintained, particularly in respect of lighting. It is recommended that this is supported by further survey work at the planning application stage. In addition, it is recommended that any trees proposed for removal are subject to survey to provide an assessment in regard to roosting activity. Following implementation of the habitat measures set out above, bats are likely to benefit under the proposals, whilst provision of bat

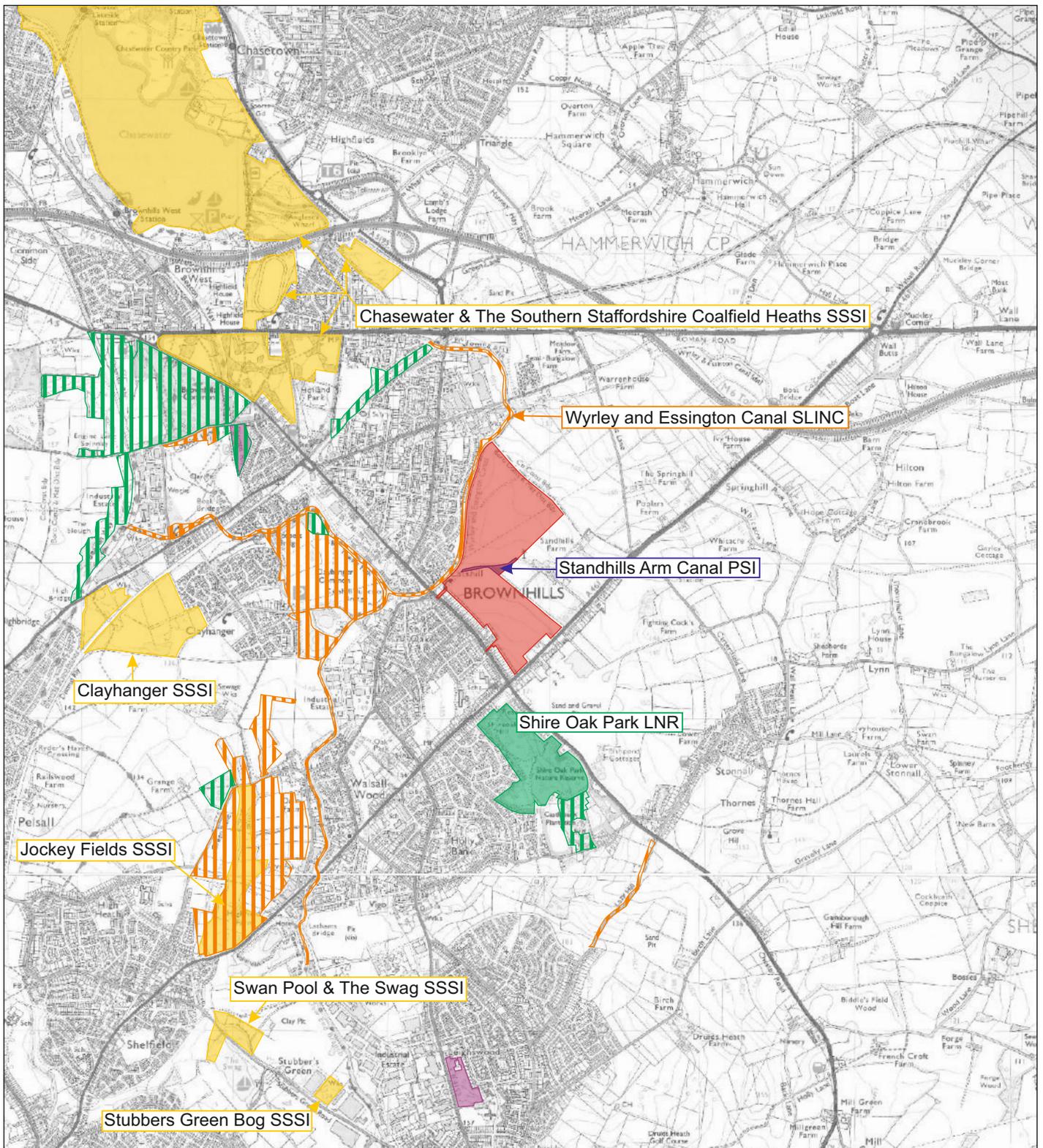
boxes on retained trees and within the fabric of new buildings would provide additional roosting opportunities for this species group.

- *Badger* – based on current evidence, no Badger setts would be affected under the proposals. However, it is recommended this is confirmed by further survey at the planning application stage.
- *Brown Hare* – it is recommended that searches for Brown Hare are undertaken as part of other survey work at the site at a planning application stage to determine presence/absence of this species. If present, consideration could be given to enhancements to the wider survey area to ensure suitable habitat is maintained for this species.
- *Birds* – it is recommended that further survey work is carried out at the planning application stage to provide a full assessment in relation to this species group. However, boundary habitats likely to be of value to bird species can be readily retained under the proposals, whilst new habitat creation can be provided within areas of open space to maintain and increase opportunities for bird species at the site. Measures such as provision of nest boxes on retained trees and within the fabric of new buildings would also provide enhancements for this species group.

5.4.9 The habitat measures set out above would also deliver benefits for other faunal species such as invertebrates, whilst increasing the likelihood of species such as reptiles and amphibians colonising the site.

5.5 Feasibility Assessment of the Proposed Development

5.5.1 Based on the results of the work undertaken, the majority of the site is considered to be unconstrained in terms of ecology. A number of minor potential constraints have been identified including Sandhills Arm Canal PSI and the presence of woodlands, hedgerows and treelines, along with the potential for protected and notable species including bats, Badger, Brown Hare and birds. However, these constraints are largely restricted to the margins of the site or established boundary features and as such it is considered that with a sensitively designed masterplan, together with the provision of appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures, the proposed development would be unlikely to result in significant effects in terms of ecology. Indeed, the proposed development provides the opportunity to create areas of new wildlife habitat within areas of open space, providing significant benefits for wildlife. As such, the proposed development is considered to be highly deliverable in ecological terms.



KEY:

- SITE LOCATION
- SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (SSSI)
- LOCAL NATURE RESERVE (LNR)
- ANCIENT & SEMI-NATURAL WOODLAND (ASW)
- SITE OF IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION (SINC)
- SITE OF LOCAL IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION (SLINC)
- POTENTIAL SITE OF IMPORTANCE (PSI)*

Information on non-statutory sites was returned for a 4x4km area around the site. Any such sites beyond this boundary may not be included on this plan.

*Full information relating to PSIs has only been provided for sites at the centre of the search area, so only PSIs relevant to the site or immediate surrounds are shown on the plan.



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**LAND AT HOME FARM,
 SANDHILLS, WALSALL**
ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS

PROJECT

TITLE

3586/BN1

DRAWING NO.

REV.

OCTOBER 2015

DATE





- KEY:
-  SITE BOUNDARY
 -  WIDER SURVEY AREA
 -  ARABLE
 -  SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND
 -  WOODLAND
 -  DENSE SCRUB
 -  SCATTERED SCRUB
 -  TREELINE
 -  TREE
 -  HEDGEROW
 -  DRY POND BASIN
 -  DITCH
 -  BUILDING
 -  HARDSTANDING/BARE GROUND
 -  AMENITY GARDENS
 -  WILD BIRD SEED
 -  PHOTOGRAPH LOCATION

LAND AT HOME FARM,
SANDHILLS, WALSALL

HABITATS, ECOLOGICAL
FEATURES AND PHOTOGRAPHS

PROJECT TITLE

3586/BN2 DRAWING NO.

OCTOBER 2015 DATE

REV. DATE

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6. Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 A heritage appraisal has been commissioned by L&Q Estates Ltd for land at Home Farm, Sandhills, Walsall. The appraisal will consider the heritage within and in the vicinity of the site and will be used to support the creation of a Masterplan for the promotion of this site within the Local Plan.
- 6.1.2 A previous heritage appraisal was undertaken for this site in 2017. This document represents an update of the appraisal, with up-to-date data searches and a site visit carried out to support the conclusions of this new report.
- 6.1.3 This report will identify any heritage assets that are potentially sensitive to changes resulting from the proposed development and set out their significance and any contribution made by setting.
- 6.1.4 The conclusions and recommendations of this report will include suggestions for input into the Masterplan, for example heritage elements which could be drawn upon for inspiration for layout or landscape design and highlight heritage features which have the opportunity to be enhanced by the scheme.

Designated Assets

- 6.1.5 Within a 1km search area from the site boundary there are four Listed Buildings, all at grade II. These are shown on **Figure 1** in Appendix 1.
- 6.1.6 There are no designated assets within the site boundary. A study area of approximately 1km was used to identify designated assets within the vicinity of the site. This area was considered appropriate given the scale of the proposed development.
- 6.1.7 The search identified that there are no Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields, Conservation Areas or World Heritage Sites within or in the vicinity of the site allocation.
- 6.1.8 There are four grade II Listed Buildings within the 1km study area:
- The Wyrley and Essington Canal Anglesey Branch Railway Aqueduct – 1077180 – 0.7km north-northwest of the site boundary;
 - Wyrley and Essington Canal Footbridge at Ogleby Junction – 1087076 – 0.2km north of the site boundary;
 - Sandhills Pumping Station – 1421472 – 0.25km east of site boundary; and
 - Fighting Cocks Farmhouse – 1374262 – 0.6km southeast of the site boundary.

Wyrley and Essington Canal Anglesey Branch Railway Aqueduct – 1077180 – Grade II

- 6.1.9 The aqueduct is located to the north of the proposed site boundary. It carries the Anglesey branch of the Wyrley and Essington Canal over the South Staffordshire Railway. The Canal was originally built in 1794 with the extension to join it to the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal made in 1797. It was made navigable in 1850, with the railway built in 1849. This aqueduct was constructed in 1856. The aqueduct was constructed by local engineers, Lloyds, Foster and Co from Wednesbury.
- 6.1.10 The significance of this asset lies primarily in its historic fabric, through which it demonstrates its architectural and historic interest. It has historic interest as part of the emergence of the transport networks of the area and as evidence of the continued growth of the industrial economy within this area. It has architectural interest in its design and as part of a wider network of structures built along the canals and railways in the mid-late 19th century.
- 6.1.11 The setting of this asset is provided by the railway and the canal, both of which provide the reason for the construction of the asset and contribute to its historic and architectural interest. The setting makes a minor contribution to the significance of the asset, but much less than the contribution made by its physical fabric. These elements make a positive contribution to the significance. The site does not form part of the setting of the asset. It is nearly 1km away from the site and the development will not alter the canal running across the aqueduct in any way. The open space of the site makes no contribution to the significance of the asset. Therefore, development within this area would not result in any harm to the significance of this heritage asset.

Wyrley and Essington Canal Footbridge at Ogley Junction – 1087076 - Grade II

- 6.1.12 This asset is the closes designated asset, located 0.2km to the north of the site boundary, just along the canal. The footbridge carries the towpath of the Wyrley and Essington Canal over disused the Ogley locks, which closed in 1954. The bridge was constructed in 1829 and is of cast iron with brick abutments. It was constructed by Horsley Iron Works, whose name is inscribed into one of the spandrels of the bridge.
- 6.1.13 The significance of this asset is demonstrated primarily in its historic and architectural interest. It is constructed from cast iron, like a number of the other structures along the canal, lending it an aesthetic coherence and tying it into the contemporary industrial landscape. It is also an aesthetically pleasing structure which is visible on the approach along the towpath when walking along the northern boundary of the site. The historic interest is found in the information it provides for the company who produced it, as well as forming part of the narrative history of the development of the canal system during the rise of the industrial period.
- 6.1.14 The setting of the asset is formed by the canal and the towpath which makes a minor contribution to the significance, less than the physical fabric. These make a positive contribution to its significance and provide the reason for the construction of the asset, contributing to its historic interest. The site

does not form part of the setting of the asset. It is the towpath which forms the contributing element to the significance of the asset, not the site. Any change within the site would not impair the ability to understand the historic and architectural interest of the asset and would thus cause no harm.

Sandhills Pumping Station – 1421472 – Grade II

- 6.1.15 This pumping station is located to the southeast of the proposed site. It is a water pumping station built in 1935 by F. J. Dixon for the South Staffordshire Waterworks Company and was constructed by Thomas Lowe and Sons Ltd. It was constructed in response to the growing population of South Staffordshire and the increased demand for a clean water supply. Sandhills was constructed in a stripped-classical style and pumps water via two boreholes. The original pumping engine has been replaced but it is still in use as a pumping station today.
- 6.1.16 The significance of this asset is demonstrated primarily through its architectural and historic interest. It is a good example of an inter-war pumping station with high-quality architectural details. Although the original machinery is lost, the fabric of the building has seen little change and the purpose is still legible. The historic interest is provided by continuing use of the building for its original purpose and the information it provides on the social history of the development of the area and the rise in population caused by the growth in industrial centres and resulting population increase.
- 6.1.17 The setting of this asset is limited and makes a negligible contribution to the significance, much less than its physical fabric. The asset was placed here deliberately to take advantage of the water table and proximity to settlements it was built to serve. There is no connection with the site and the site does not form part of its setting. Change within the site resulting from the development will not cause any harm to the significance of the asset.

Fighting Cocks Farmhouse – 1374262 – Grade II

- 6.1.18 Fighting Cocks Farmhouse is a late 18th-century farmhouse, of typical L-shaped plan. The name of the farmhouse suggests it may have been the site of cockfighting or been a farm where cockerels were bred for fighting.
- 6.1.19 The significance of this asset is demonstrated primarily by its fabric which holds historic and architectural interest. It is a good example of the local vernacular and provides evidence for the rise of the agrarian economy and sustaining of that economy in an area which was becoming increasingly industrial.
- 6.1.20 The setting of this asset makes a minor contribution to the significance of the asset, not as great as the contribution made by its physical fabric. The setting is formed by the agricultural surroundings of the asset which may have once been the land farmed by this farmhouse, the proposed site does not form part of the landholdings of this asset and has no historic association. The site therefore does not

form part of the setting within which this asset is experienced and understood and therefore change within the site will cause no harm.

Additional assets

- 6.1.21 There is a scheduled monument located just on the edge of the 1km site boundary to the south – The Castle Fort at Castlebank Plantation (1017244). This is an Iron Age, univallate hillfort located on a hill near Castlebank Plantation. The scheduled area covers 1.6ha and includes the earthwork remains of banks, ditches, but the site has been affected by the construction of modern housing, quarrying and other intrusive excavations and the site is currently a mix of woodland and scrubland. The significance of this asset lies in the archaeological and historic interest it contains. It has the potential to contain evidence of Iron Age society in this area and of the material culture. The survival of the asset provides evidence that this area was utilised during the Iron Age period and may indicate further Iron Age activity within the vicinity. The setting of this asset is the higher ground on which it is located which would have given it an elevated status. The function of the fort is not certain, it may have been defensive, or, more likely, was a higher status residence with the banks and ditches physically separating the inhabitants from the surrounding landscape. Views to and from this asset contribute to the significance in terms of adding to its historic interest. The views towards the asset would be of a large structure and show the higher status of the inhabitants. The setting is also formed by the modern development which surrounds the asset on two sides. This makes a negative contribution to its significance by eroding its historic interest.
- 6.1.22 The proposed site forms part of the wider surroundings of the asset, but does not form part of the setting. It is not part of the surroundings within which the asset is experienced. Changes within the site therefore would not harm the significance of the asset. In addition, even if the site were visible from the asset, it is at some distance, would require a view over an existing sand and gravel quarry and would be seen as an extension of Brownhills. As such, this view would not detract or reduce the significance of the asset to any further degree than has already been experienced. Therefore, the scheduled monument would not experience any harm to its significance from development of the site.

Non-designated Assets

- 6.1.23 A search of the Wolverhampton and Walsall Historic Environment Record was undertaken to identify non-designated assets, such as archaeological sites and findspots and non-designated buildings within a 500m study area around the site boundary. The location of these assets is shown on Figure 2.

Prehistoric (pre10,000BC – 43AD)

- 6.1.24 One non-designated asset is recorded in the HER dating from this period, the site of a possible Bronze Age barrow (4012) located outside the site boundary. The location is not confirmed and it is

thought the barrow was destroyed by the construction of the canal, then later housing developments in the 20th century.

6.1.25 There is the scheduled monument of the hillfort located within the Castlebank Plantation discussed above, which provides evidence for later Iron Age occupation of the area, but nothing further has been found within the study area.

6.1.26 There is low potential for prehistoric remains to be located within the site boundary.

Medieval (1066 – 1540)

6.1.27 Two medieval assets have been identified within the HER data, both located outside the site boundary. These are the route of an old road (14315) running from Wolverhampton to Wednesbury. This runs along the line of Lichfield Road and the route is therefore preserved in the landscape in some places.

6.1.28 The other asset is the site of a ditch (13163) found during a watching brief for flood alleviation works in 2002. No dating evidence was found but it was thought to be a ditch to divide the manors of Ogley Hay and Shenstone.

6.1.29 The site was most likely used for agricultural purposes during the medieval period and may have been common grazing land.

Post-medieval to Modern (1540 – present)

6.1.30 The majority of the assets identified during the search date from the post-medieval period. It was within this period that industry began to arrive within the area facilitated in large part by the creation of the Wyrley and Essington canal (13573). The original section of this opened in 1784, with an extension through Brownhills opened in 1797. This transport link opened up the areas it travelled through for the import and export of goods and in particular, coal was transported along this canal. Canal boats allowed a much greater bulk of material to be transported as opposed to road travel and this led to an increase in industry and the mining and quarrying of materials.

6.1.31 A number of assets are associated with the canal, including the listed Ogley Junction footbridge to the north of the site and the aqueduct carrying the canal over the South Staffordshire Railway. Further non-listed examples include Anchor Bridge (9478) located north of the footbridge built in 1797 to carry the Old Chester turnpike road over the canal.

6.1.32 A later addition to the canal network was the Sandhills Arm of the Wyrley and Essington canal (5893). This line branched off the main canal network, running southeast towards a group of industrial buildings located around the site of Home Farm and was located within the site boundary. Associated with this canal branch were a small number of industrial buildings and a wharf (10216)

located on the northern side of the complex. The canal branch and wharf are shown as disused by 1903 and have been infilled. A number of buildings remain, including a larger residence initially labelled as The Sandhills on early mapping but now known as Home Farm (5992). This may have originally been the residence of the owner of the industrial complex around the canal wharf, as the house is fairly large, with ornamental features such as a walled garden with ornamental tree planting and an avenue lining the drive with possibly associated estate fence lining the southern boundary along the A416. A lodge, Sandhills House Lodge (5891) is located off the A416 at the entrance to the drive towards Home Farm. This lodge does not appear on the 1st edition OS maps but does appear on the 1902 map.

- 6.1.33 Located to the east of Home Farm, within the site boundary is the site of Sandhills Farm (15243). Buildings are shown here on early 19th century mapping and the site is interesting as a large tank is depicted within the footprint of the buildings and it may be that this was originally some sort of industrial complex associated with gravel extraction.
- 6.1.34 Located directly south of the site boundary is Shire Oak House (5993). This is a mid-19th-century villa, set within its own grounds. It has undergone a series of name changes, first known as Bleak House, the Hill House and finally Shire Oak House by 1919. It is now a residential home. Adjacent to this is the site of a gravel pit (10217). It was still being worked in 1938 and was one of a number of small-scale gravel extraction pits located on the periphery of the site.
- 6.1.35 There are a number of additional non-designated assets dating from this period, many of which are indicative of the growing population and the increase in industrialisation. Two public houses are identified, The Leopard Inn (15244) and the Shireoak Inn (10218) and there are recorded sites of former industrial sites such as Ogle Hay Steam Flour Mill (6156) and farms (10584). Other sites identified within the study area from this period include the site of Lindale House (9507) now demolished and associated outbuildings (9525), also demolished, the site of a toll house (9477) and the rough location of an area of rabbit warren (9157).
- 6.1.36 The series of historic Ordnance Survey maps shows the change in the landscape which has occurred over the late 19th and early 20th century. Within the site, the major changes have been the introduction of the Sandhills Arm of the Wyrley and Essington Canal which cut across the site and the later use of a large portion of the area as an orchard. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map shows the site, with Sandhills House, Home Farm. The entrance to Sandhills House is shown leading northwest from Lichfield Road, with what appears to be a formal avenue of trees lining the driveway. In the surrounding landscape, directly adjacent to the site boundary is the site of Bleak House. This building is shown within its own grounds. On the 1902 Ordnance Survey map, the name of the building has been changed to Hill House, and the 1919 Ordnance Survey map has this as Shire Oaks, with a large gravel pit located immediately west.

- 6.1.37 The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map shows the settlement of Catshill to the northwest, separated from the site by the canal. The settlement is very linear, with little other development in the vicinity of the site. There are a number of collieries within the area, but it is likely that during the 19th century, the site was used for agricultural purposes. The 1902 Ordnance Survey map shows either a substantial orchard or a tree growing nursery covering the majority of the site, depicted as regular rows of tree-planting which surrounded Home Farm and left all but a few fields uncovered. This map shows the area of Sandhills Farm as enlarged, with a number of gravel pits and possible glasshouses. A lodge building has appeared at the entrance to the drive leading to Sandhills House (Home Farm). It also shows the development of Shire Oak to the southwest of the site with housing appearing along Chester Road.
- 6.1.38 There is little change within the site until the removal of the orchard in the mid-20th century. The settlements within the surroundings of the site expand during the 20th century. By the 1950s, the settlement of Shire Oak has expanded with housing added on the northeastern side of Chester Road and linking the settlement of Ogle Hay, forming one continuous strip of development. This expansion continues until the extents seen in the present day. The proposed development site remains unchanged.

Unknown

- 6.1.39 There are three assets which are of unknown date, all located within the site boundary. There is an area of woodland to the northwest of Home Farm (**14819**) known as Sandhill Wood. The woodland is shown on 19th century mapping, prior to the mass planting of the area, but its date is unknown. The HER records suggests that surveys have assessed this as being a recent plantation, rather than an area of Ancient Woodland.
- 6.1.40 There are two records derived from aerial photographs of the site, both located at the very eastern edge. There is a cropmark (**10650**) of a linear which bears no relation to current field boundaries and the cropmarks of two oval features (**10351**). These have not been archaeologically tested and therefore cannot be verified.

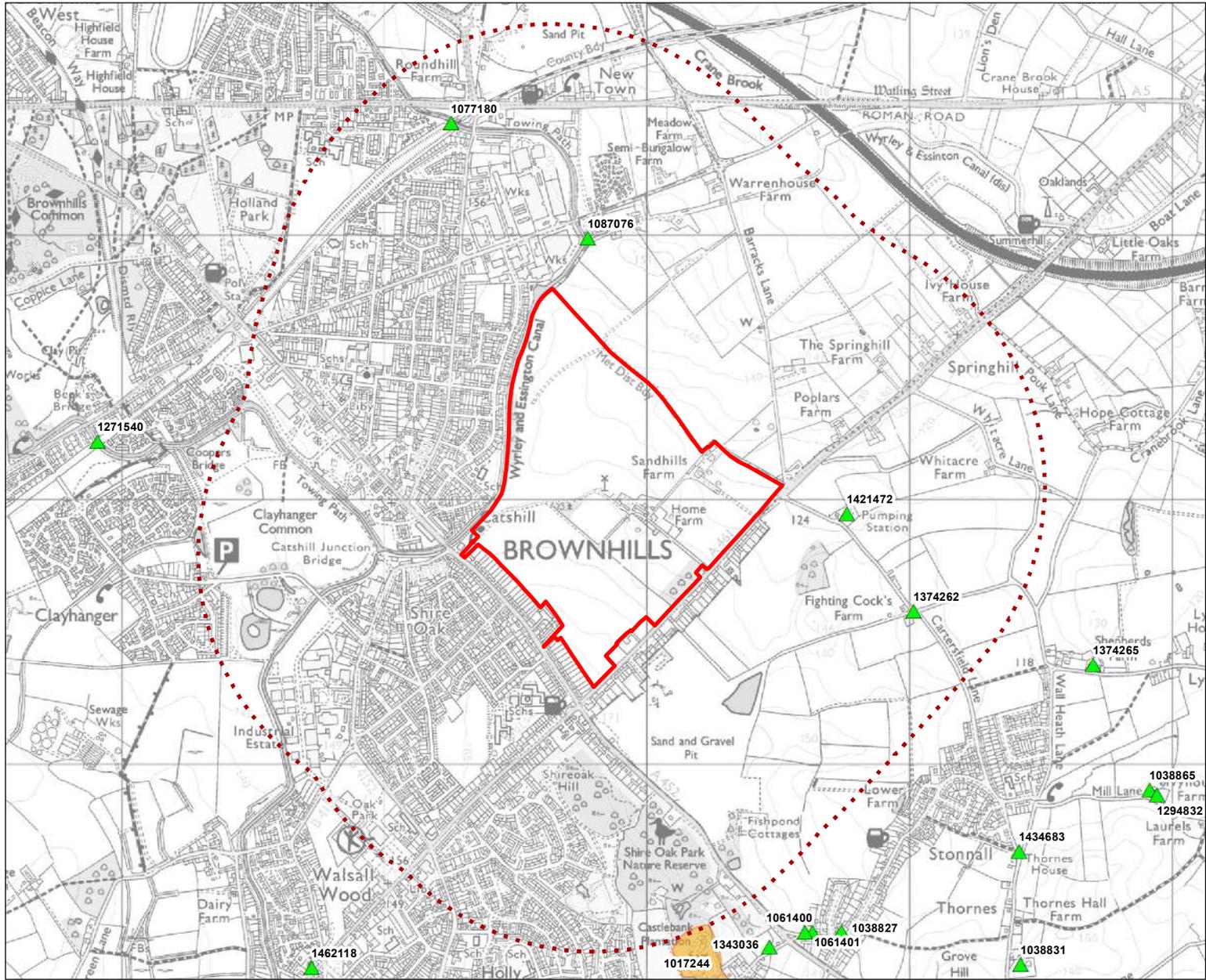
Recommendations and Conclusions

- 6.1.41 This Heritage Appraisal has assessed the potential impact of the allocation of land at Home Farm, Sandhills upon the significance of heritage assets identified within the vicinity. This appraisal also provides background information to feed into the masterplan for the site.
- 6.1.42 It is recommended that the Masterplan try to reincorporate through planting, the creation of a swale or a footpath the line of the former Sandhills Arm of the Wyrley and Essington Canal which once cut through the site from the west. This will help to reinstall this historic landscape feature and give the development a sense of place and connectivity with the extant line of the canal and allow and understanding of the industrial past of the area. This would also accord with policy ENV4 of the

Black Country Core Strategy 2011 as it would not preclude the restoration of this lost feature in the future and would enhance its heritage significance by reinstating its course within the landscape to be visible and appreciable.

- 6.1.43 Historic mapping has shown that a significant portion of the site was utilised as either an orchard or some sort of woodland nursery for at least 50 years. The planting of the trees was strong and regular and it would be an interesting and different landscape feature which would provide a reminder of the historic landscape here which would be an out of the ordinary and different approach to the standard woodland planting that is incorporated into other masterplans for similar sites.
- 6.1.44 Although there are not any designated heritage assets within the site, or which would be considered to experience any harm from the proposed development, there are still opportunities for the enhancement of the surrounding heritage by reintroducing the line of the Sandhills Canal branch and then providing interpretation boards to connect this to the canal, the listed Ogleby Junction footbridge just to the north of the site and the listed Aqueduct located further north along the canal route. These items would create heritage benefits which could be taken into consideration in the overall planning balance for the site.
- 6.1.45 There are no designated assets within the site boundary. There are four grade II listed buildings within 1km of the site boundary, two associated with the Wyrley and Essington Canal and two further listed buildings. This appraisal has set out the significance of these assets and the contribution made by setting and concluded that this site could be delivered without causing harm to the significance of the buildings.
- 6.1.46 There is the potential for below-ground archaeology to be present within the site, in particular the area around the former line of the Sandhills arm of the Wyrley and Essington Canal and the industrial buildings in the area now occupied by Home Farm.
- 6.1.47 Given the previously undeveloped nature of the majority of the site, there is potential for unknown archaeological deposits to be located here, however this potential is considered to be low. The use of much of the site as an orchard or tree nursery for many decades will have disturbed any earlier below-ground archaeology. Below-ground archaeology does not form a constraint to the successful delivery of this site.
- 6.1.48 The appraisal has identified that with the development of a high-quality and sensitive masterplan that takes note of the recommendations above, the development of this site would not result in any harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets within the vicinity.

APPENDIX 1 - FIGURES



KEY

- Site
- Study Area
- ▲ Grade II Listed Building
- Scheduled Monument

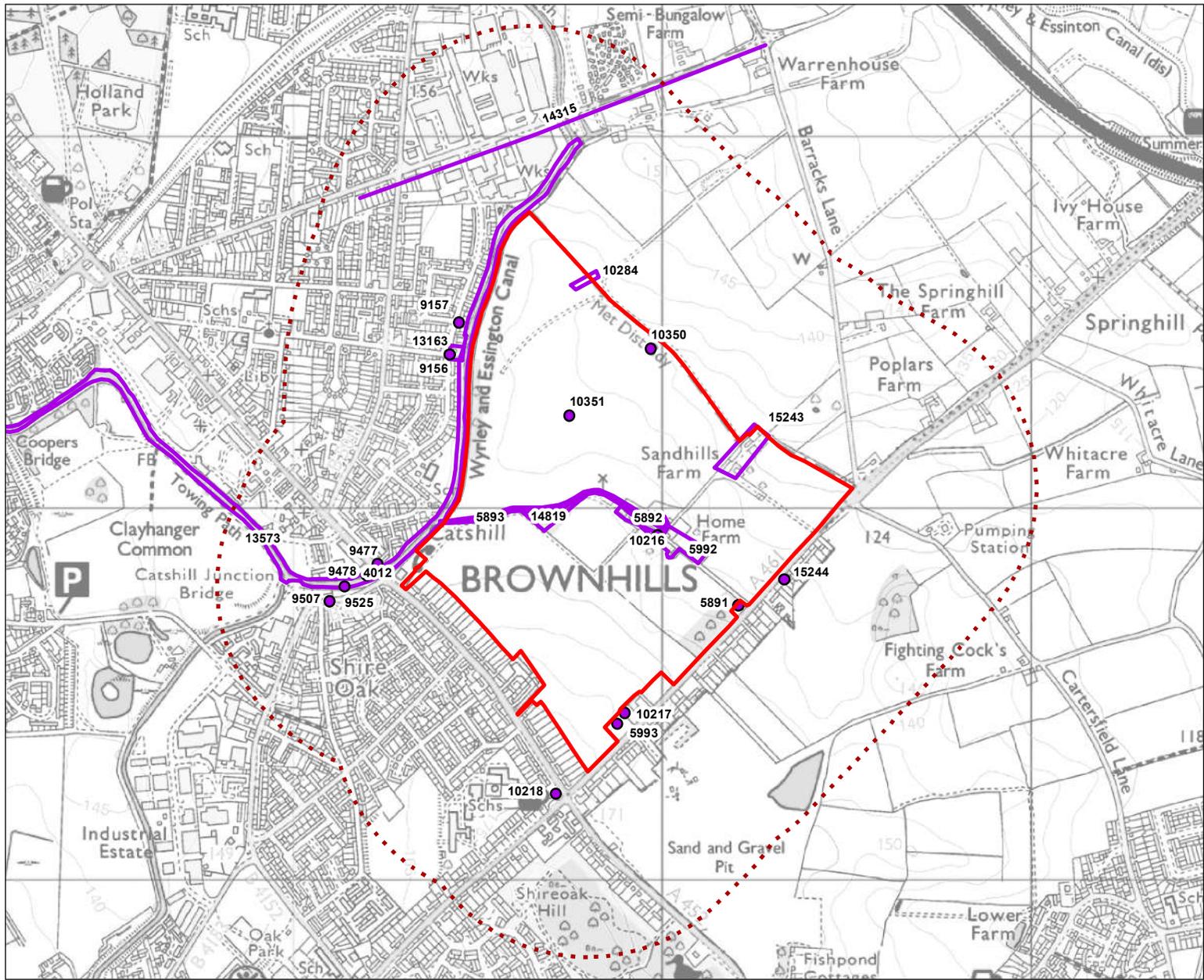
Revisions:
First Issue- 12/08/2020 RG

Figure 1: Designated Heritage Assets

Land at Home Farm, Lichfield Road, Brownhills

Client: Gallagher Estates Ltd.
 DRWG No: BIR.4327 Sheet No: - REV:-
 Drawn by: RG Approved by: LG
 Date: 12/08/2020
 Scale: 1:22,500 @ A3





KEY

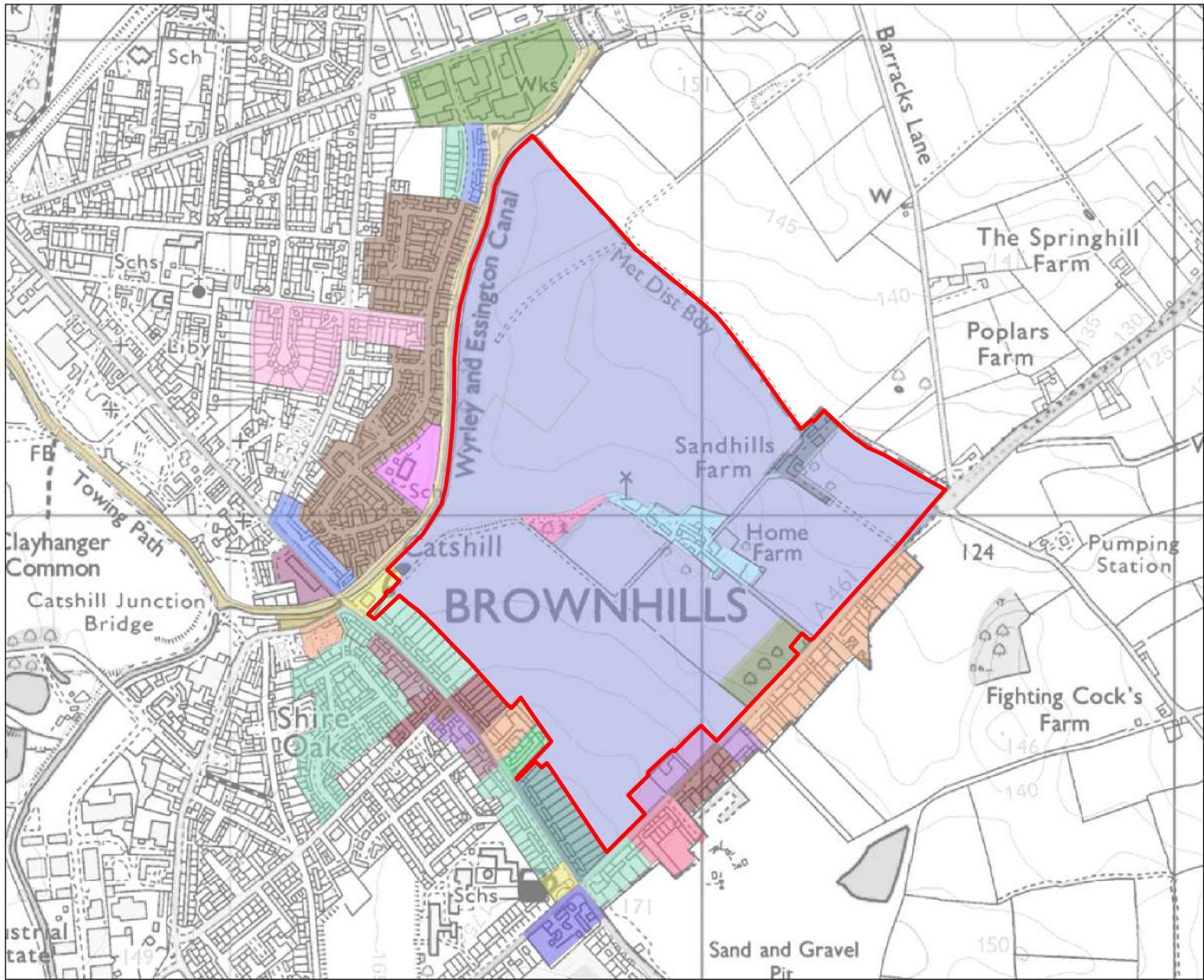
- Site
- Study Area
- HER Monument Point
- HER Monument Line
- HER Monument Polygon

Revisions:
First Issue- 18/08/2020 RG

Figure 2: Wolverhampton and Walsall HER Data

Land at Home Farm, Lichfield Road, Brownhills

Client: Gallagher Estates Ltd.
 DRWG No: BIR.4327 Sheet No: - REV:-
 Drawn by: RG Approved by: LG
 Date: 18/08/2020
 Scale: 1:16,000 @ A3



- KEY**
- Site
 - Apartments/maisonettes
 - Canal (Used)
 - Country house
 - Deciduous woodland
 - Derelict land
 - Farm
 - High rise flats
 - Large detached housing
 - Medium detached housing
 - Medium semi detached housing
 - Mixed large semis and detached housing
 - Mixed medium semis & terrace housing
 - Mixed medium semis and detached housing
 - Mixed small semis & terrace housing
 - Mixed small semis and detached housing
 - Mixed woodland
 - Planned enclosure
 - Public house
 - Reservoir
 - School
 - Small semi detached housing
 - Small terrace housing
 - Works

Revisions:
First Issue- 14/08/2020 RG

Figure 3: Historic Land Characterisation Data

Land at Home Farm, Lichfield Road, Brownhills

Client: Gallagher Estates Ltd.
 DRWG No: BIR.4327 Sheet No: - REV:-
 Drawn by: RG Approved by: LG
 Date: 14/08/2020
 Scale: 1:12,500 @ A3



7. Drainage

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 THDA Limited prepared this statement on the hydrology of the site and proposals for foul and surface water drainage. It is based on its visit to the site guided by the farmer, a study of sewerage records purchased from Severn Trent Water, and reviews of Internet data on the web sites of the Environment Agency and British Geological Survey.

7.1.2 A plan titled “Drainage Principles”, appended, shows contours within the site at five metre spacing, the area in which the British Geological Survey shows the presence of diamicton till superficial deposits, the location of the watercourse serving the site, and provisional principal surface water and sewage drainage routes proposed to serve the development.

7.2 Baseline Condition

7.2.1 British Geological Survey mapping shows that near surface bedrock beneath the site is a mixture of sandstone or conglomerate. Superficial deposits of diamicton till are present over a substantial area of the northern part of the site. In the vicinity of the only natural principal watercourse within the site (which is a headwater of the Crane Brook), there are superficial deposits of glaciofluvial sands and gravels.

7.2.2 A number of records for boreholes drilled within or close to the site are publicly available from British Geological Survey. These records show that locally the water table is at considerable depth and that deeper rocks mainly comprise various red sandstones.

7.2.3 Environment Agency mapping confirms that the bedrock beneath the site is a major aquifer, from which there is a public water supply abstraction located to the south east of the site. A small area of land in the south eastern corner of the site is classified as Source Protection Zone 2, and the remainder of the site is classified as Source Protection Zone 3. The type of development proposed is compatible with these Zones, but reasonable care will be needed with development drainage and control of pollution in general.

7.2.4 The farmer advised that the land in the northern part of the site has a sandy top soil and has occasional clay content and has field drains installed that are connected to the principle watercourse on the site to aid drainage. The area of land served by this drainage is similar to the area where diamicton till is indicated as present. The remainder of the land is very free draining, as witnessed during the site visit.

7.2.5 The principal watercourse is culverted under Lichfield Road with a 300 mm diameter pipe. The invert of the pipe is about 1.2 metres below ground level at the south east of the site.

- 7.2.6 Contours confirm that there is one valley line within the site to which all parts of the site fall with a minimum general gradient of about 1:68. The lower end of the valley contains the principal watercourse.
- 7.2.7 Environment Agency mapping also shows that whereas there are historic and authorised landfills beyond the site boundary, none is recorded within the site. The entire site is classified as Flood Zone 1. Reservoir flood routes have been removed from the Environment Agency website, so have not been checked, but are thought to be not relevant to the site.
- 7.2.8 As the entire site is Flood Zone 1, and it is not an area with special drainage problems, the development is proposed in the best flood risk location and is not subject to a Sequential Test.
- 7.2.9 No other flood risks to the development became apparent as a result of the site visit and desktop research.
- 7.2.10 Severn Trent Water serves the urbanised areas to the south, west and north of the site with foul and surface water sewerage. The foul sewers in Chester Road and Lichfield Road are 150mm and 225mm diameter. Based on 1,500 dwellings a foul flow of approximately 70 litres per second would be expected, so it is unlikely that the existing sewers would have spare capacity. Typically a 300mm diameter pipe would be needed to convey a flow of this magnitude.
- 7.2.11 Dwellings in Lichfield Road to the south of the site are served by a sewage pumping station. There is a 125 mm diameter rising main from this station which is located under the southern edge of the site.

7.3 Proposed Drainage Strategies

- 7.3.1 The outline proposal for disposing of sewage from the development is to provide a sewerage network discharging to a single purpose built on site pumping station located in the valley line. This will pump sewage through the site along a line similar to that shown on the Principles Plan to a Severn Trent 1050 mm diameter foul sewer in Lindon Road. In due course Severn Trent will need to be approached to agree this or any other point of connection, to ensure their networks have adequate capacity, and to agree the timescales for both development and potential network improvements.
- 7.3.2 There are many options for disposing of surface water from the development. The site benefits both from permeable strata and has access to a principal watercourse. As such much of the site can be drained directly to ground, or can be taken directly to the watercourse. Good land gradients and large areas of suitable located open space will allow suitably sized ponds to be located – these ponds can either be used to infiltrate or attenuate the flow prior to discharge to the water course.

7.3.3 Details of surface water drainage and disposal will be dependent mainly on the results of site investigation, planning decisions on what water features may be required as amenity, ensuring compliance with current and emerging SuDS guidance, and the advice as yet to be given by the Environment Agency about the balance between using infiltration to sustain the aquifer and discharge to watercourse to sustain riverine ecology.

7.3.4 Where ground conditions allow, typically roofs could be drained direct to soakaways. Typically roads would drain to the watercourse, thereby allowing implementation and maintenance of the longer treatment trains required. Swales and infiltration lagoons would be a viable and economic alternative.

7.4 Conclusion

7.4.1 This preliminary appraisal of water related environmental factors, including flood risk, groundwater/abstraction and drainage, fully supports the draft master plan for the development as drawn.

8. Ground Conditions

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 This chapter considers the ground conditions of the Home Farm, Sandhills site, and in particular the Mineral Safeguarding Area which the site lies within, and why it is not considered suitable for mineral extraction.

8.2 Ground Conditions and Mineral Safeguarding Area

8.2.1 The site is located within a Mineral Safeguarding Area for Sand and Gravel (Policy MIN1 of the Black Country Joint Core Strategy). The purpose of a Minerals Safeguarding Area is to alert prospective developers to the existence of mineral resources, so that they can be taken into account at the earliest possible stage of the development project.

8.2.2 The policy explains that proposals for non-mineral development within Mineral Safeguarding Areas will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the development will not result in sterilisation of the resources within these areas. All non-mineral development proposals will be encouraged to extract any viable mineral resources present in advance of construction where practicable, and where this would not have unacceptable impacts on neighbouring uses. The policy requires supporting information to be submitted to demonstrate that mineral resources will not be sterilised. The supporting information is required to demonstrate that:

- Mineral resources are either not present, are of no economic value or have already been extracted as a result of a previous site reclamation scheme or other development; or
- Extraction of minerals is not feasible, for example due to significant overburden or because mineral extraction would lead to or exacerbate ground instability; or
- Prior extraction of minerals would result in abnormal costs and/or delays which would jeopardise the viability of the development; or
- There is an overriding need for the development which outweighs the need to safeguard the mineral resources present; or
- Extraction of minerals would have unacceptable impacts on neighbouring uses, the amenity of local communities or other important environmental assets.

8.2.3 Mindful of the above, the site at Home Farm, Sandhills is not considered suitable for mineral extraction. It is a sensitive location given the uses that immediately border the site including, in particular, Millfield Primary School and residential properties along the Chester Road and Lichfield Road. The area surrounding the site is generally residential in nature, particularly to the west and south. In addition, the Wyrley and Essington Canal borders the site western boundary and mineral extraction could have a severe impact on ecology in and around the canal side.

- 8.2.4 In addition to the sensitive uses that surround the site that render the site unsuitable for mineral extraction, the Environment Agency have confirmed that the bedrock beneath the site is a major aquifer, from which there is a public water supply abstraction located to the south east of the site. A small area of land in the south-eastern corner of the site is classified as Source Protection Zone 2, and the remainder of the site is classified as Source Protection Zone 3. The residential development of this site is compatible with these Zones. Should the site however be used for mineral excavation, the aquifers below the site could be adversely affected by the backfilling operations. This has the potential to cause problems regarding pollution risk. The backfilling of the site following excavation would also lead to the current permeable site becoming impermeable thereby reducing aquifer recharge. Any excavation and subsequent backfilling of the site would have implications on the future use of the site. The current sand and gravel soils provide ideal ground conditions to build on, being both permeable and stable, foundation solutions would become an issue on filled ground which would affect costs and values and potentially lead to issues with the viability of the development of the site in the future.
- 8.2.5 In essence, this site is not suitable for mineral extraction. Whilst the site overlies substantial sand and gravel reserves, these minerals are not a scarce resource and given the extent of other land potentially available for mineral extraction in the area which does not have such constraints it is the case that the need for minerals from this site does not outweigh what are material planning objections to such a use in this location.

8.3 Summary

- 8.3.1 In light of the above it is concluded that this site is suitable for residential development in accordance with both local and national planning policy which promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. A proposal for an alternative use, such as mineral extraction, would not be. Notwithstanding this it is considered that the site is unsuitable for mineral extraction given its location relative to a number of sensitive receptors and the potential for pollution risk with regards the aquifers below the site. Sand and gravel reserves are not in short supply and given that there is the extent of land potentially available locally for mineral extraction without the use of this site, it is therefore the case that the loss of this site as a potential mineral location is not significant and does not outweigh the legitimate material planning benefits arising from the use of the site for residential development as suggested.
- 8.3.2 In conclusion, having undertaken the above initial work in relation to the site's ground conditions, it is considered that the site is suitable for residential development.

9. Agricultural Land

Agricultural Land Classification

9.1.1 This section presents the initial Agricultural Land Classification assessment which has been undertaken by Kernon Countryside Consultants Limited (KCC) to identify any major constraint to development on the site.

9.1.2 There are two principal agricultural considerations in the selection of development sites. These are:

- The effect on land and its quality; and
- The effect on farm businesses.

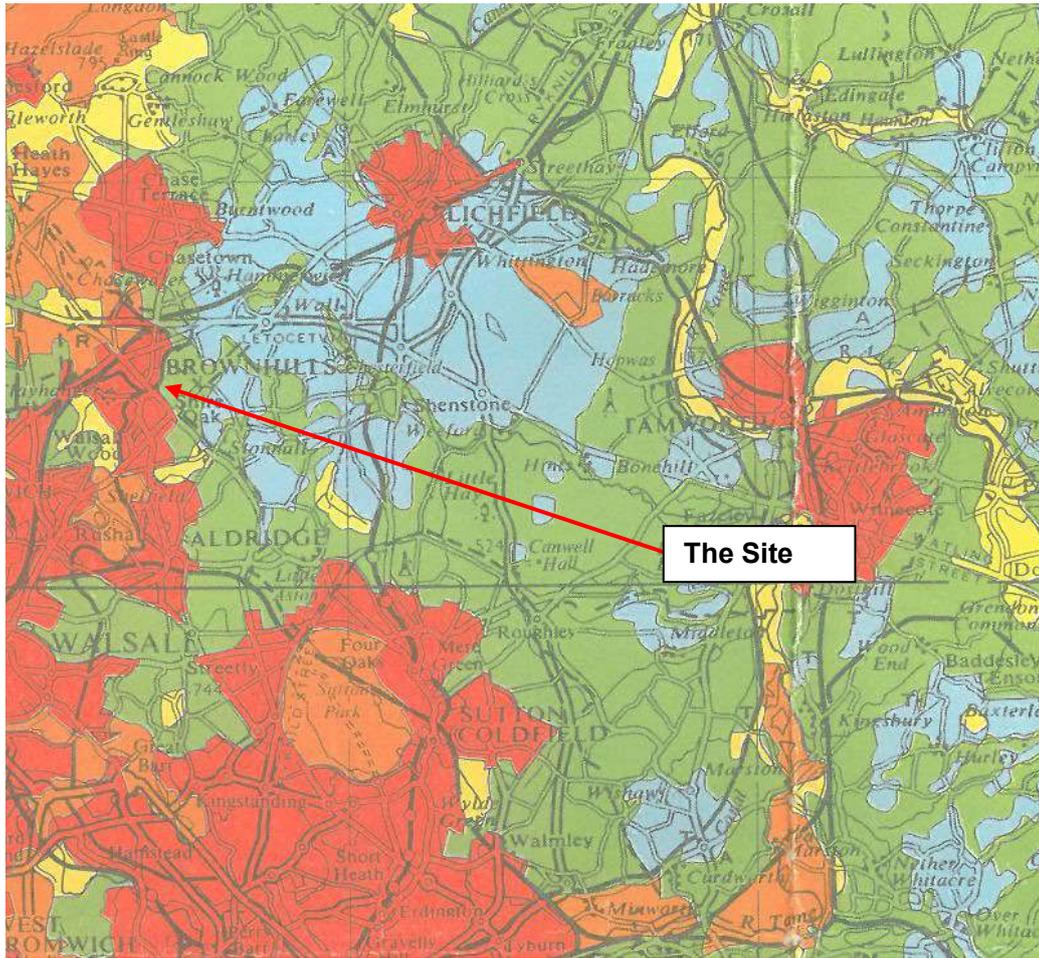
9.1.3 National Policy Guidance governing the non-agricultural development of agricultural land is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) (NPPF). Paragraph 112 of the NPPF notes that local planning authorities:

“should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.”

9.1.4 The best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV) is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as land of Grades 1, 2 and 3a in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) Agricultural Land Classification (ALC).

9.1.5 The Agricultural Land Classification Survey (ALC) system divides land into five grades according to the extent to which its inherent characteristics can be exploited for agricultural production. Grade 1 is described as being of excellent quality and Grade 5, at the other end of the scale, is described as being of very poor quality. ALC is based upon an assessment of limiting factors including soils, climate, and other physical limitations and the way in which these factors interact.

9.1.6 The provisional agricultural land classification map (MAFF 1983), as attached overleaf at **Figure 9.1**, shows undifferentiated Grade 3 land over the site. The map is provisional and was designed to be used for areas larger than about 80 hectares in extent and boundaries on this plan do not necessarily reflect the detailed situation. Since the map was constructed there has been changes to the classification. In particular Grade 3 has been subdivided into sub Grades 3a and 3b and the effects of the interaction between climate and soils are now more clearly stated which puts the land quality more clearly into the local context. The current Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food ALC system was last revised in 1988.



Agricultural Land



Non-Agricultural Land



NORTH



FIGURE	9.1		
TITLE	Extract from the Provisional ALC Plan (1983)		
SITE	Home Farm, Sandhill		
CLIENT	L&Q Estates		
NUMBER	KCC2116/01 10/15/vmd		
DATE	October 2015	SCALE	NTS

KERNON COUNTRYSIDE CONSULTANTS LIMITED
GREENACRES BARN, STOKE COMMON LANE, PURTON STOKE, SWINDON,
WILTSHIRE, SN5 4LL
Tel 01793 771333

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9.1.7 A review of www.MAGIC.gov.uk has identified that the site has been the subject of a detailed ALC survey which was carried out in February and March 1994, in accordance with the current MAFF Guidelines (1988). A copy of the survey is attached at **Appendix 9.1**. It should be noted that the conclusions of the report relate to the wider site area, of which only part of the land is proposed for development. The survey has identified the site to comprise mainly of sub Grade 3a land, with a swathe of sub Grade 3b land running through the middle of the site in an east – west direction. There are also areas of woodland and agricultural buildings within the site.

9.1.8 **Table 9.1** below sets out a breakdown of the grading across the site.

Table 9.1: ALC Grading across the Site

Grade	Description	Area (Ha)	Area (%)
3a	Good	62.1	74
3b	Moderate	15.7	19
Ag Buildings	Ag Buildings	2.2	2
Woodland	Woodland	1.7	2
Non-Ag	Non-Ag	1.9	2
TOTAL		83.6	100

* The table above relates to the grading across the wider site and, as set out on the indicative Masterplan, a smaller proportion of the site is proposed for development, which includes all of the 3b graded land identified.

9.1.9 The wider site area comprises predominately of sub Grade 3a and Grade 3.b land. The developable area proposed, however, includes a smaller proportion of Grade 3a land and all of the Grade 3b land. A review of land quality in and around Brownhills indicates that this site actually comprises some of the lower quality land in the locality. Surveys to both the north and west of the site identify areas of Grade 2 land, i.e. land of a higher quality than that found at Home Farm, as illustrated at **Appendix 9.2**. Please note that Appendix 9.2 relates to the wider site and not the development area, which is proposed on the Indicative Masterplan.

9.1.10 Although the site comprises of sub Grade 3a land with an area of sub Grade 3b, the presence of “best and most versatile land” around Brownhills is common place. Indeed, much of the surveyed land to the north and east of Brownhills has been identified as being of Grade 2 quality.

9.1.11 The NPPF requires that, where “significant” development of BMV land is demonstrated to be necessary, poorer quality land is used in preference. In this case, the development of sub Grade 3a land will represent the development of poorer quality land in the area with much of the land around Brownhills comprising of Grade 2 land.

Existing Farming Business

9.1.12 L&Q Estates has engaged with the owner of the existing farming business on site. The owner of the farming business has confirmed that the business would not be severely affected by the development proposals which are being promoted through this Background Document. The owner currently farms around 2,000 acres, and it is notable that the promotional agreement to secure development on this site does not include the farm houses and associated buildings. Therefore, from a practical perspective the farming business will be able to continue to operate as normal after any residential development is secured and implemented. The promotional agreement covers approximately 200 acres, so even if all of this area was withdrawn from the current farming land base, this would only represent a 10% reduction in the farmed area, which would not be a significant change. As such, development proposals will not prejudice the existing farm business.

9.2 Summary

9.2.2 With regards to Agricultural Land Classification, the wider site has been found to comprise land of sub Grade 3a and Grade 3b. The site proposed for development includes a smaller proportion of Grade 3a land and all of the 3b land. Although sub Grade 3a is considered to be “best and most versatile agricultural land”, a review of land quality in and around Brownhills indicates that the site actually comprises some of the lower quality land in the locality, with surrounding areas being identified as being of Grade 2 quality. The development of this site would therefore represent use of poorer quality land in accordance with the NPPF, which states where significant development of BMV land is demonstrated to be necessary, poorer quality land is used in preference.

9.2.3 This Chapter has also demonstrated that development proposals will not prejudice the existing farm business, as outlined at paragraph 9.1.12.

9.2.4 In conclusion, having undertaken the above initial work in relation to the site’s agricultural land quality, it is considered that the site is suitable for residential development.

APPENDIX 9.1
MAFF ALC SURVEY REPORT

**AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION
LAND AT HOME FARM, SANDHILLS**

**R D METCALFE
Resource Planning Team
ADAS Statutory Group
WOLVERHAMPTON**

**ADAS Ref: 25/RPT/0617
Job No: 8/94
MAFF Ref: EL46/10407**

**AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION REPORT FOR
LAND AT HOME FARM, SANDHILLS**

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Survey for this site shows that the following proportions of ALC grades are present:

Grade/Subgrade	ha	% of site
3a	64.0	76
3b	15.7	19
Other land		
Agricultural buildings	2.0	2
Non-Agricultural	1.9	2

- 1.2 The main limitation to the agricultural use of land in Subgrades 3a and 3b is topsoil stone content.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The site was surveyed by the Resource Planning Team in February and March 1994. An Agricultural Land Classification survey was undertaken according to the guidelines laid down in the "Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales - Revised Guidelines and Criteria for Grading the Quality of Agricultural Land" (MAFF 1988).
- 2.2 The 83.6 ha site is situated to the east of Brownhills and north west of the A461 road. The land in the north adjoins a canal, and the west boundary adjoins housing, while the north eastern boundary adjoins farmland.
- 2.3 The survey was requested by MAFF in connection with an ad-hoc development proposal for an industrial development.
- 2.4 At MAFF Land Use Planning Unit's request this was a detailed grid survey at 1:10000 with a minimum auger boring density of 1 per hectare. The attached map is only accurate at the base map scale and any enlargement would be misleading.
- 2.5 At the time of the survey the site was mostly under cereals, brassicas with some fallow land.

3. CLIMATE

3.1 The following interpolated data are relevant for the site

Average Annual Rainfall (mm)	725
Accumulated Temperature above 0°C January to June (day °C)	1315

3.2 There is no overall climatic limitation on the site.

3.3 Other relevant data for classifying land include:

Field Capacity Days (days)	170
Moisture Deficit Wheat (mm)	91
Moisture Deficit Potatoes (mm)	77

4. SITE

4.1 Three site factors of gradient, micro relief and flooding are considered when classifying land.

4.2 These factors do not impose any limitations on the agricultural use of the land.

5. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

5.1 The solid geology of the area is shown as Soft Sandstone with Pebble Beds - British Geological Survey Sheet 154 1 inch.

5.2 The underlying geology influences the soils which have a sandy loam texture overlying loamy sand and sand.

6. AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

6.1 Subgrade 3a - occupies 64.0 ha (76%) of the survey area.

6.1.1 The soil has a sandy loam texture over loamy sand and sand to depth and with up to 15% stones greater than 2cm size present.

6.1.2 The main limitation to the agricultural use of this land is topsoil stone content.

6.2 Subgrade 3b - occupies 15.7 ha (19%) of the survey area and is found in the northern and eastern parts of the site.

6.2.1 The soil typically has a sandy loam texture overlying loamy sand and sand to depth. The topsoil content with stones greater than 6cm in size is up to 10%.

6.2.2 The main limitation to the agricultural use of this land is topsoil stone content.

6.3 Other land includes agricultural buildings and farm tracks.

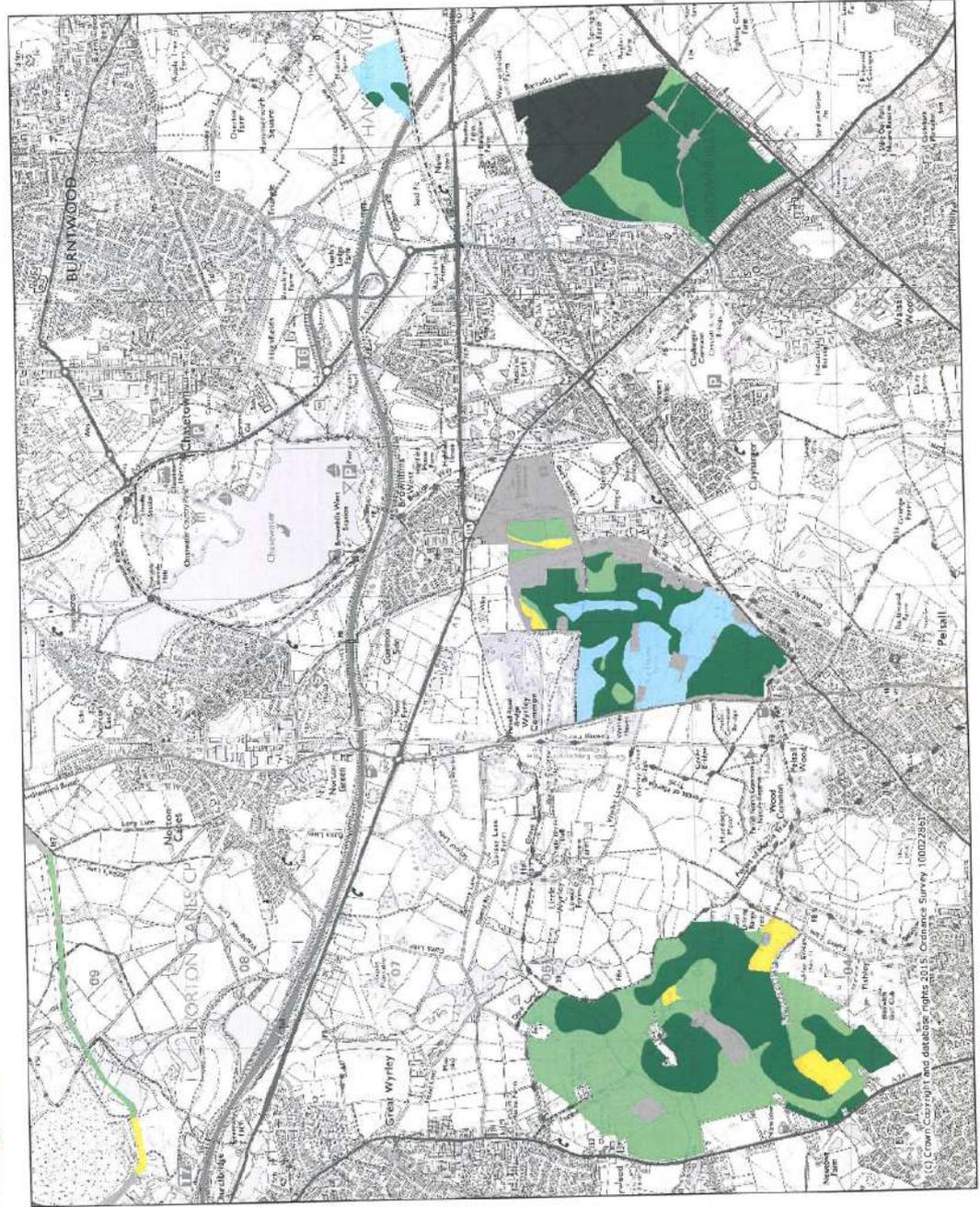
6.4 **SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION GRADES**

Grade/Sub-grade	Areas in Hectares	% of Survey Area	% of Agricultural Land
3a	64.0	76	80
3b	15.7	19	20
Other land			
Agricultural buildings	2.0	2	-
Non-Agricultural	1.9	2	-
Totals	<u>83.6</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

March 1994

APPENDIX 9.2

MAFF ALC SURVEY RESULTS FOR LAND AROUND BROWNHILLS



10. Conclusions

10.1 Conclusion

10.1.1 This Technical Compendium relates to the site known as 'Home Farm, Sandhills, Walsall'. This document has been updated in response to the 2020 Call for Sites of the Black Country Plan Review. Previous versions of this document have been prepared in response to other consultations in relation to the Walsall Local Plan and the Black Country Core Strategy Review, and alterations have been made where applicable in light of any changes in contextual information.

10.1.2 Land at Home Farm, Sandhills is a highly sustainable and deliverable site and it is proposed that it should be allocated for residential development as part of the Black Country Plan Review. The site provides an opportunity to deliver a significant amount of housing (circa 1,200) with associated infrastructure and open space, which will assist to meet the development requirements of Walsall and the wider Black Country and meet the housing needs of local people in a successful manner.

Suitable

10.1.3 The site comprises of Green Belt land on the edge of Brownhills. As demonstrated in Section 2, the site is a suitable candidate for release from the Green Belt from a landscape perspective. Brownhills is identified in the current Development Plan as a 'regeneration corridor' with a wider range of services and facilities in the nearby town centre, therefore the site is well placed to meet the future development needs of the area.

10.1.4 The town is also located in close proximity to the towns of Walsall, Sutton Coldfield and city of Lichfield.

10.1.5 As such, the site is considered to be a sustainable location for residential development and will contribute towards meeting the housing needs of Walsall and the wider Black Country.

Available

10.1.6 The land is under the control of L&Q Estates, a Master Developer who is committed to putting the land to market as soon as planning permission has been obtained and relevant site wide conditions discharged. This model allows the potential for multiple house builders to deliver the site efficiently and effectively. L&Q Estates is committed to obtaining planning permission for the land at the earliest opportunity following an appropriate allocation as part of the adopted Local Plan.

10.1.7 There are no legal ownership matters which would prevent the land from being delivered for residential use.

Achievable

- 10.1.8 The site is greenfield and as demonstrated throughout the technical chapters, there are no constraints to development that would pose the site to be unviable to deliver. L&Q Estates has reviewed the economic viability of the site and proposals, including considering land values, market attractiveness and demand, sales rates and development costs and can confirm the development is economically viable to deliver.
- 10.1.9 In terms of the delivery programme, it is possible that if the site were to be allocated, completions could commence on site within 2 to 3 years of adoption - this would be subject to planning permission. It is anticipated that two to three developers would build at a rate that would see the site complete within 10 years or well within the plan period.

10.2 Summary

- 10.2.1 To summarise, the site will deliver a significant quantity of much needed housing in the medium to long term in a sustainable location. The proposed development is viable and can be delivered in a timely manner. The site is therefore achievable.
- 10.2.2 L&Q Estates are committed to engaging and working with Walsall Council and the local community to design a high quality residential development.
- 10.2.3 The development will consider site specific constraints and opportunities, and will ensure that development proposals respect the existing character of the area.
- 10.2.4 In light of the information prepared, it is considered the site is suitable, available and achievable for development to meet emerging requirements for dwelling provision in both Walsall and indeed the needs of the wider Black Country.