



# Area Assessment Study

## Bromsgrove District Plan

September 2013



## **Area Assessment Study**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council is currently developing a District Plan that will deliver the District's vision and aspirations and provide a framework for guiding development up to 2030. One of the aims of the Bromsgrove District Plan (BDP) is to deliver 7,000 homes by 2030 to meet the full objectively assessed housing needs for the District. The allocation of 7,000 houses will effectively be delivered in two stages. The BDP will allocate land to deliver the first 4,600 homes in the period to approximately 2022/23. Following the adoption of the BDP a Green Belt Review would be undertaken to identify the remaining land to accommodate 2,500 homes in the period 2023-2030 The Review will also identify sufficient land for the period beyond 2030 to ensure that there is a permanence to Green Belt boundaries.
- 1.2 In conjunction with the SHLAA this evidence base document was written to help identify the most suitable development sites prior to a Green Belt Review. Whilst the SHLAA primarily considers sites that are promoted to the Council, this assessment goes a step further by assessing all parcels of land around settlements regardless of the availability of the land. This will also ensure that the most sustainable sites are chosen.
- 1.3 The area assessment work commenced prior to publication of the Draft Core Strategy 2 (DCS2) in 2011 in conjunction with 'Bromsgrove Development Options' and was written within an uncertain political and planning context. The Panel Report into the Phase 2 Revision of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy identified an initial housing target of 4,000 over the period 2006-2021 with the potential for a further 2,000-3,000 between 2021 and 2026 if it could be accommodated in a sustainable manner. The initial purpose of this work was to identify the most appropriate way to deliver the initial 4,000 homes when considering all reasonable alternatives.

- 1.4 The Bromsgrove Development Options document built on the issues and options consultations that took place in 2005 and 2007 where a range of options were considered including brownfield only development, growth only in Bromsgrove Town and apportioning growth across the District. This document considered all realistic options for large scale growth before identifying that the most sustainable option was to focus the largest proportion of growth on Bromsgrove Town. Once the strategic sites around Bromsgrove Town had been identified this left some scope for development in the large settlements of Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Catshill, Hagley, Rubery and Wythall. Whilst the 'Bromsgrove Development Options' document was published at the same time of DCS2, this was not the case with this document. This is considered to be a live document that is being regularly updated to reflect changes in the position of sites (e.g. the SHLAA), planning policy (e.g. NPPF) and has also been amended to reflect responses to the DCS2. A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has been undertaken on every site assessed to ensure that the most sustainable outcomes have been achieved.
- 1.5 This document does not consider growth beyond any of the large settlements. The Settlement Hierarchy shows a clear distinction between Bromsgrove Town, the large settlements and the smaller settlements in the District. Bromsgrove Town and the large settlements all have good access to public transport and a wide range of services and facilities. It is therefore logical to focus growth in these more sustainable locations. Many of the smaller settlements have more limited facilities and services and lie in the Green Belt. Future development would not be completely ruled out in these smaller settlements if a need was justified, especially if it could be demonstrated that development would have wider sustainability benefits.
- 1.6 This document assesses a wide range of sites around the large settlements of Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Catshill, Hagley, Rubery and

Wythall and clearly identifies the strengths and weaknesses of each site providing a clear explanation as to why an area has either been discounted or considered as suitable for development.

- 1.7 A number of factors have been considered including sustainability, flood risk, landscape sensitivity, Green Belt implications and environmental designations. The site assessment also includes a brief visual appraisal undertaken on each of the sites following site visits.
- 1.8 In some cases these sites were promoted through the SHLAA process and have developer interest. Whilst this demonstrates the potential positive deliverability of the site it is important to look beyond these promoted sites to ensure that any future development sites are located to best integrate into the relevant settlement and help to create sustainable communities.
- 1.9 Whilst this assessment identifies the most appropriate sites to develop in the first part of the plan period, this piece of work could be viewed as a starting point to provide a platform on which the Green Belt Review can be carried out. This assessment does not go into the level of detail required for a full Green Belt Review but will provide an indication of possible future development options.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Setting the Context**

2.2 As explained in the introduction, the context of this assessment has shifted slightly since work began in 2010 although the intention has always been to ensure that all reasonable alternatives were considered and full justification was provided where sites are discounted. To gain a full and detailed understanding of the topic a review of all appropriate documents at national, regional, sub regional and a local level was undertaken and updated following the publication of the NPPF.

### **2.3 Site Visits**

2.4 Every site that was considered around each of the large settlements was assessed on site by a Planning Officer. The site visits took place on various dates throughout 2010. The key purpose of the site visits was to consider whether there were any obvious physical constraints and to undertake a visual appraisal of each site.

### **2.5 Site Identification and Assessment**

2.6 It was important to determine the particular areas and sites that should be assessed. The 'Bromsgrove Development Options' determined that the most sustainable option was to focus the largest proportion of growth on Bromsgrove Town and therefore assessed all parcels of land around Bromsgrove Town. The sites identified and then assessed were generally a similar size to the ADR sites around the town to ensure comparisons were made on a 'like for like' basis. The amount of land that was identified as currently being suitable for housing development around Bromsgrove Town meant that further land would need to be identified in other settlements to achieve housing targets.

2.7 The work undertaken on the settlement hierarchy highlighted that whilst Bromsgrove Town had the greatest range of services and facilities, the large settlements of Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Catshill, Hagley, Rubery and Wythall were also sustainable locations. The area assessment

work therefore focusses on these large settlements which are assessed in turn. Once again all land around these settlements has been assessed and the site sizes identified are broadly proportionate to the size of the ADRs in these areas.

- 2.8 The assessment of each site goes into a reasonable level of detail across a range of topics detailed below. Much of the information has been gathered through desk based research and certainly does not go into the level of detail to support a planning application. For example, there has been no detailed highway modelling work, ecology assessments, site specific flood risk assessments or any viability testing carried out on the deliverability of these areas. The purpose was to provide a strategic overview for each site identifying key strengths, weaknesses and to identify the best location for growth.

## **2.9 Site History**

- 2.10 A number of the sites assessed have been previously considered through the plan making process. Where this is the case it is important to highlight any comments made on the site by the Local Plan Inspector to provide some historical context into how the site has been considered previously. Where sites have been recently promoted through the SHLAA this is identified in the update provided at the end of each individual site assessment.

## **2.11 Green Belt**

- 2.12 With approximately 91% of the District being located within the designated Green Belt the vast majority of sites assessed were within the designated Green Belt. Each site was assessed against the 5 purposes of including land within the Green Belt with any key issues being identified.

## **2.13 Flood Risk**

- 2.14 Using information gathered from the Flood Maps available on the Environment Agency website and the Council's Level 1 Strategic Flood



Risk Assessment (SFRA), the level of any potential flood risk on each site has been identified. Where appropriate the information has been updated by the more recent Level 2 SFRA.

## **2.15 Visual Appraisal**

- 2.16 Based on site visits and the use of aerial photographs, the visual impact of development was considered and photos from key public viewpoints were taken. It is important to avoid development in highly prominent locations and identify sites that relate to the adjacent settlement.

## **2.17 Landscape Sensitivity**

- 2.18 Landscape sensitivity relates to the stability of character, the degree to which that character is robust enough to continue and to be able to recuperate from loss or damage. Worcestershire County Council has developed a map showing the Landscape Sensitivity in the County. The map has been used to determine whether each site is of low, medium or high landscape sensitivity.

## **2.19 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 2.20 Maps have been used to determine the quality of agricultural land across each site. In some cases the strategic map has been used to determine the likely presence of best and most versatile agricultural land. Where more detailed agricultural land classification maps were available these were instead. Around the majority of the district there is a high proportion of good quality agricultural land. This means that the assessment for each site is very similar on this issue. On this basis agricultural land quality is not a determining factor when identifying the sites which are most suitable for development

## **2.21 Historic Environment**

- 2.22 Bromsgrove District contains 469 listed buildings, 12 designated Conservation Areas and a number of other heritage assets. Through the use of maps and the English Heritage website it has been identified



whether any historic assets are within or adjacent to each site to determine if there is likely to be a significant impact on the historic environment.

- 2.23 Worcestershire County Council has completed a Historic Environment Assessment of Bromsgrove District. It provides a strategic level, integrated historic environment evidence base to support policy and Green Infrastructure documents aimed at shaping future development strategy. The project combined county landscape character mapping with Historic Environment Record data and an outline Historic Landscape Character assessment. The maps within the assessment have been used to determine the historic environment sensitivity of each site.

## **2.24 Green Infrastructure**

- 2.25 The use of Defra's MAGIC software was valuable in obtaining the required green infrastructure data. The web-based interactive maps bring together information on key environmental schemes and designations in one place. The interactive maps also provided records on ancient woodlands, habitat inventories, and other key data sets. Other green attributes of the areas were also explored, such as statutory designations like Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Special Wildlife Sites (SWS) as well as Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

## **2.26 Sustainability**

- 2.27 The site appraisals also took into account sustainability issues, whether it was associated with access to services and facilities or making use of existing infrastructure. Desktop studies examined each area's proximity to schools, GP surgeries, local retail and the accessibility to public transport. In order to find these services, a number of websites with search functions were used. To find health services the NHS website (<http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search>) was used, which detailed the nearest GP surgeries to a particular site. In order to find educational

establishments, the government website (<http://schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk/>) was used. Regarding public transport, a combination of 'Google Maps' and the government website ([www.transportdirect.info](http://www.transportdirect.info)) were used to find the nearest public transport links. These websites had maps identifying nearby bus stops and train stations.

## **2.28 Conclusions**

2.29 Using the various components of analysis that form each site assessment, a conclusion was made detailing the main strengths and weaknesses of each site. Following this, recommendations are made highlighting the site or sites within each settlement are most suitable for housing growth to help meet housing targets.

## **2.30 2013 Update**

2.31 Each site was originally assessed in 2010. Where additional information has become available this has been added. In most cases this either related to outcomes from the Draft Core Strategy 2 consultation or the submission of a site to the SHLAA.

## **2.32 Sustainability Appraisal (SA)**

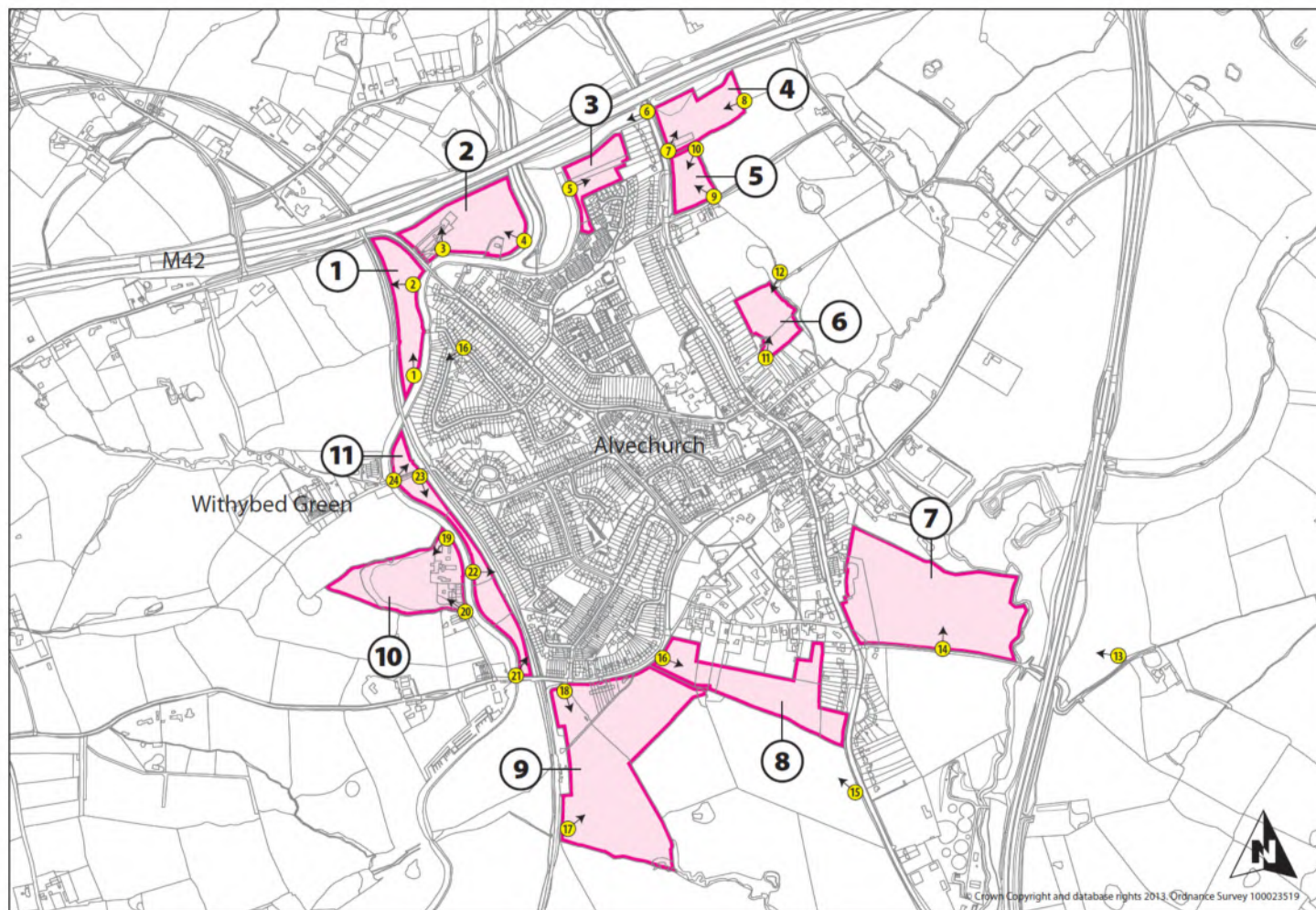
2.33 In order to better understand the implications of the site options within each settlement a Sustainability Appraisal of each of the individual sites has been undertaken. Each site around all of the large settlements has been individually assessed against the SA Objectives. The outcomes from each of the sites have been compared against each other to identify those which performed best. The assessment will help to determine which sites could deliver the most sustainable form of development for each large settlement. The Sustainability Appraisal is a separate document but has been referenced in the conclusions in the assessment of the land around each large settlement. The SA has assisted in the decision making process to determine which sites can deliver the most sustainable form of growth across the district.

## **2.34 Overall Conclusions**

- 2.35 The overall conclusions will highlight the sites that are considered most suitable for housing over the next ten years prior to the Green Belt Review. It is then explained how this assessment can be used as basis for the beginnings of the Review, when considering the suitability of land around the large settlements.

### **3. Alvechurch Assessment**

- 3.1 Alvechurch is a village to the northeast of Bromsgrove and is located in between of Birmingham and Redditch. The village has its own railway station on the Cross City line linking Redditch, Birmingham and beyond to Lichfield. There is also a bus service linking to Birmingham and Redditch, with various bus stops on Birmingham Road and Redditch Road. There is also a range of services and facilities located along Red Lion Street, Bear Hill and Radford Road, including a number of shops, restaurants, pubs and doctor's surgery. A total of eleven possible development sites have been identified in and around the periphery of Alvechurch. Each of these sites will be assessed to determine their suitability to contribute to the delivery of 4,000 homes across the District up until 2021. All sites have been visited as part of the appraisal process and a selection of photos from each site are attached at Appendix 1. All photos were taken from publicly accessible positions and the approximate locations where the photos were taken are shown on Map 1 below.



Map 1: Alvechurch Areas including Photo viewpoints

## **Area 1: Land west of Callow Hill Road**

### **3.2 Site Description**

- 3.3 The site is approximately 2.1 hectares and falls within the Green Belt. It is contained by Callow Hill Road to the north, the railway line to the west, the canal to the south and east, and Callow Hill Road to the north-east. The site is currently used as pasture.

### **3.4 Site Assessment**

### **3.5 Site History**

- 3.6 The site was promoted as a possible ADR by developers at the Inquiry into the Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan. The Inspector did not support the site stating:

*“The north-west sector of Alvechurch the canal forms a strong limiting feature to development, clearly delineating the urban area of the village from the countryside beyond and marking a distinct change in character. Jumping that barrier would cause development to encroach into open countryside and would be particularly noticeable to users of the canal and those walking and cycling on the towpath” (Inspector’s Report, 2001, p.169).*

### **3.7 Green Belt**

- 3.8 The site is within the designated Green Belt and therefore it is important to consider the Green Belt function of the site. The canal forms a strong defensible boundary for the existing settlement. Although the railway line and Callow Hill Road will still act as strong defensible boundaries for the site, developing the other side of the canal would lead to encroachment into the countryside and affect the amenity of canal users.

### **3.9 Flood Risk**

- 3.10 The site is next to the Birmingham and Worcester canal and there is no historic flooding record for this part of the canal.

### **3.11 Visual Appraisal**

- 3.12 The site is relatively flat, except the steep embankment leading up to the railway to the west. There are tree-lined hedge along the north and west boundary and some trees along the canal, but the numerous large gaps make the site clearly visible from the towpath and from the gate on Callow Hill Road.

### **3.13 Landscape Sensitivity**

- 3.14 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

### **3.15 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 3.16 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England, it does not appear that the land is likely to be the best and most versatile land (less than 20% likelihood). On this basis, the best and most versatile land is not an undue constraint on development.

### **3.17 Historic Environment**

- 3.18 The site falls within the Hopwood HECZ and the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ<sup>1</sup>. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity<sup>2</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

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<sup>1</sup> Bromsgrove Historic Environment Assessment 2010

<sup>2</sup> Sensitivity scores of Hopwood HECZ and Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ are both 2.



3.19 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **3.20 Green Infrastructure**

3.21 The Worcester and Birmingham canal that forms part of the site boundary is a SWS<sup>3</sup>. The SWS habitat is open water – flowing marshland reedbeds, which means maintaining/ improving the existing water quality is crucial if the SWS habitat is to be protected.

3.22 The Birmingham and Worcester canal is an important recreational resource. If the site is developed, it would be particularly noticeable to users of the canal and those walking and cycling on the towpath.

3.23 The site is bounded by hedgerow trees and hedgerows which are the key characteristics of the Principal Timbered Woodland landscape type<sup>4</sup>.

3.24 The amenity values<sup>5</sup> of the two HECZs show that part of the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. However, these two zones have medium to high potential scores<sup>6</sup>, meaning that the likelihood for the presence of additional/ high quality historic environment features in the zone is medium to high. An archaeological survey is likely to be required to fully assess this issue.

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<sup>3</sup> SWS Reference: SO96/19

<sup>4</sup> Information obtained from the online Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment.

<sup>5</sup> Amenity value score of the Hopwood HECZ is 2 and that of Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ is 1.

<sup>6</sup> Potential score of the Hopwood HECZ is 2 and that of Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ is 3.

### **3.25 Sustainability**

3.26 The nearest school and bus stop are around 800m<sup>7</sup> walking distance away from the site, but the majority of local services and the railway station are 950m and 1200m away. Based on the 800m walking distance assumption, the school and bus stop are the only facilities that are just about within the walking distance. However, all facilities are within short cycling and driving distance.

### **3.27 Summary**

3.28 The site is not within walking distance from the majority of local services. Developing the site would cause development to encroach into open countryside and would be particularly noticeable to users of the Birmingham and Worcester canal and those walking and cycling on the towpath. These reasons indicate that the site is currently unsuitable to contribute to the delivery of new housing.

### **3.29 2013 Update**

3.30 The site has been promoted through the SHLAA as:

- Land West of Callow Hill Road (BDC88)

3.31 The site is not currently considered to be suitable for development due to its Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

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<sup>7</sup> Driving distance is around 1100m away

## **Area 2: Land east of Callow Hill Road**

### **3.32 Site Description**

- 3.33 The site is approximately 3 hectares and falls within the Green Belt. It is contained by the M42 motorway to the north, the canal to the south and east, and Callow Hill Road to the west. A working farm, several cottages, a bungalow and kennels are currently situated in the site.

### **3.34 Site Assessment**

### **3.35 Site History**

- 3.36 The site was promoted as a possible ADR by developers at the Inquiry into the Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan. The Inspector did not support the site stating:

*The site “fulfils the very important Green Belt function of safeguarding this vulnerable stretch of countryside from encroachment. To allow development to jump the Canal into an area which is generally devoid of any significant development... would be quite unacceptable. Moreover, (the site) in this elevated location would be particularly intrusive when seen from the adjacent well-used Canal and its towpath and, at greater distance, from locations to the south and west”*(Inspector’s Report, 2001, p.162-3).

### **3.37 Green Belt**

- 3.38 The site is within the designated Green Belt and therefore it is important to consider the Green Belt function of the site. The canal serves as a strong barrier for the existing settlement. Although Callow Hill Road, the motorway and the canal will still act as strong defensible boundaries for the site, developing the site would lead to encroachment into the countryside and affect the amenity of canal users.

### **3.39 Flood Risk**

- 3.40 The site is next to the Birmingham and Worcester canal and there is no historic flooding record for this part of the canal.

### **3.41 Visual Appraisal**

3.42 The gradient of the site increases from west to east. There are a few properties situated in the west lowland and because there is no tree cover, the site can be clearly seen from the towpath. Though views of the eastern section are now blocked by the thick hedge, it is expected that development here will be visible due to the height of land.

### **3.43 Landscape Sensitivity**

3.44 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

### **3.45 Agricultural Land Quality**

3.46 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England, it does not appear that the land is likely to be the best of most versatile land (less than 20% likelihood). On this basis, the best and most versatile land is not an undue constraint on development.

### **3.47 Historic Environment**

3.48 The site falls within the Hopwood HECZ. The historic environment in this zone is of medium sensitivity<sup>8</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

3.49 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

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<sup>8</sup> Sensitivity score of the Hopwood HECZ is 2.

### **3.50 Green Infrastructure**

- 3.51 The Worcester and Birmingham canal that forms part of the site boundary is a SWS<sup>9</sup>. The SWS habitat is open water – flowing marshland reedbeds, which means maintaining/ improving the existing water quality is crucial if the SWS habitat is to be protected.
- 3.52 The Birmingham and Worcester canal is an important recreational resource. If the site is developed, it would be particularly noticeable to users of the canal and those walking and cycling on the towpath.
- 3.53 The site is bounded by hedgerow trees and hedgerows which are the key characteristics of the Principal Timbered Woodland landscape type<sup>10</sup>.
- 3.54 The amenity value of the Hopwood HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. The medium potential score<sup>11</sup> of the zone means that the likelihood for the presence of additional/ high quality historic environment features is medium. An archaeological survey is likely to be required to fully assess this issue.

### **3.55 Sustainability**

- 3.56 The nearest school and bus stop are around 800m<sup>12</sup> walking distance away from the site, but the majority of local services and the railway station are 950m and 1200m away. Based on the 800m walking distance assumption, the school and bus stop are the only facilities that are just about within walking distance. However, all facilities are within short cycling and driving distance.

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<sup>9</sup> SWS Reference: SO96/19

<sup>10</sup> Information obtained from the online Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment.

<sup>11</sup> Potential score of the Hopwood HECZ is 2.

<sup>12</sup> Driving distance is around 1100m away

### **3.57 Summary**

3.58 The site is not within walking distance from the majority of local services. Developing the site could cause some encroachment into the Green Belt. The sites elevated location in the east would be particularly noticeable to users of the Birmingham and Worcester canal and those walking and cycling on the towpath. These reasons indicate that the site is currently unsuitable to contribute to the delivery of new housing.

### **3.59 2013 Update**

3.60 Excluding the bungalow plot, the site has been promoted through the SHLAA as:

- Land East of Callow Hill Road (BDC89)

3.61 The site is not currently considered to be suitable for development due to its Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

### **Area 3: Rear of Birmingham Road (ALVE 6)**

#### **3.62 Site Description**

- 3.63 The site is approximately 1.3 hectares in size and falls within an Area of Development Restraint. It is contained by land that abuts an embankment of the M42 motorway to the north, the canal to the west, and the existing residential development on Oaktree Close and Birmingham Road to the south and east.

#### **3.64 Site Assessment**

#### **3.65 Site History**

- 3.66 The site was considered as a suitable ADR at the Inquiry of the Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan. The Inspector considered that:

*“future development in this location would not lead to encroachment into the countryside, would not encourage settlements to merge and would not represent the sprawl of a large built up area. Instead, it would provide an opportunity to ‘round off’ the settlement up to the highly defensible boundary of the motorway”* (Inspector’s Report, 2001, p156-7).

- 3.67 The Inspector therefore concluded that:

*“Taking the site out from the Green Belt would have a minimal impact on the effectiveness of the Green Belt surrounding this part of the settlement.”* (Inspector’s Report, 2001, p156-7).

#### **3.68 Green Belt**

- 3.69 Whilst the site is no longer in the Green Belt it is important to consider the wider Green Belt implications of developing the site. The site has well defined defensible boundaries with the motorway to the north, the canal to the west and existing developments to the south and east. The boundaries can be seen as logical defensible boundaries.



Developing the land will not lead to any sprawl into the Green Belt nor coalescence of settlements.

### **3.70 Flood Risk**

3.71 The site is next to the Birmingham and Worcester canal and there is no historic flooding record for this part of the canal.

### **3.72 Visual Appraisal**

3.73 The site slopes downwards from west to east towards the Birmingham Road and though there are thick hedgerows along the west boundary, the site can be seen through gaps in trees from the towpath of the disused arms of the canal. There are lots of trees along the north embankment with motorway and tall conifers border a number of properties on Birmingham Road. The southern section of site is woodland.

### **3.74 Landscape Sensitivity**

3.75 The landscape in this area is of low sensitivity<sup>13</sup>, which means the landscape character here is the most resilient to changes.

### **3.76 Agricultural Land Quality**

3.77 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England, it does not appear that the land is likely to be the best and most versatile land (less than 20% likelihood). On this basis, the best and most versatile land is not an undue constraint on development.

### **3.78 Historic Environment**

3.79 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ<sup>14</sup> and the historic environment in this zone is of medium sensitivity<sup>15</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for development to

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<sup>13</sup> Landscape Sensitivity Map is produced by Worcestershire County Council and is reproduced in the Green Infrastructure Baseline Report.

<sup>14</sup> Bromsgrove Historic Environment Assessment 2010

<sup>15</sup> Sensitivity score of the Lickey and Blackwell, Alvechurch and Barnt Green HECZ is 2.

occur in low sensitivity areas, historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

- 3.80 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **3.81 Green Infrastructure**

- 3.82 The Worcester and Birmingham canal that forms part of the site boundary is a SWS<sup>16</sup>. The SWS habitat is open water – flowing marshland reedbeds, which means maintaining/ improving the existing water quality is crucial if the SWS habitat is to be protected. As the site is bounded by the disused arm of the Birmingham and Worcester canal, development in this location would not be particularly noticeable to users of the canal and those walking and cycling on the towpath.
- 3.83 The site contains ‘possibly unimproved grassland’ and ‘broadleaved woodland’<sup>17</sup>. Around 0.5ha of land in the southern part of the site (i.e. area next to the residential development on Oaktree Close) is “broadleaved woodland” protected by the Tree Preservation Orders<sup>18</sup>. “Broadleaved woodland” is also one of the priority species in the UK & Worcestershire BAP. A survey may be required to check the biodiversity value of the ‘possibly unimproved grassland’ area.
- 3.84 The site is bounded by some woodlands and the ancient wooded character is one of the key characteristics of the Principal Timbered Woodland landscape type<sup>19</sup>.
- 3.85 The amenity value<sup>20</sup> of this HECZ zone shows that the site does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining local distinctiveness and

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<sup>16</sup> SWS reference: SO96/19

<sup>17</sup> Information obtained from Worcestershire Habitat Inventory.

<sup>18</sup> TPO case number: ZZZZO0DPXT565

<sup>19</sup> Information obtained from the online Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment.

sense of place from the historic environment point of view. The potential score<sup>21</sup> though shows that the likelihood for the presence of additional/ high quality historic environment features in the zone is high. An archaeological survey is likely to be required to fully assess this issue.

### **3.86 Sustainability**

- 3.87 The nearest school and bus stop are just around 400m away from the site, but the majority of local services and the railway station are around 900m and 1800m away. Based on the 800m walking distance assumption, the school and bus stop are the two facilities within a comfortable walking distance. However, all facilities are within short cycling and driving distance.

### **3.88 Summary**

- 3.89 The site is close to the school and bus stop. Though it falls outside the walking distance from the village centre, the flat topography may encourage people to walk there. The site is located beside the disused arm of the Birmingham and Worcester canal and will therefore have little impact to the canal and towpath users. There is broadleaved woodland within the site boundary which should be protected from development. The site has strong defensible boundary of the motorway and developing the site would not lead to encroachment into the countryside. These reasons indicate that the site is suitable for development.

### **3.90 2013 Update**

- 3.91 Planning permission for 27 dwellings on this site has been granted (11/0672). According to the Housing Land Availability Report 2013, 7 dwellings have been completed whilst 20 dwellings are still under construction.

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<sup>20</sup> Amenity value score of the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ is 1.

<sup>21</sup> Potential score of the Lickey and Blackwell, Alvechurch and Barnt Green HECZ is 3.

## **Area 4: Land opposite to 119-129 Birmingham Road**

### **3.92 Site Description**

- 3.93 The site is approximately 1.9 hectares and falls within the Green Belt. It is bounded by the M42 motorway to the north, Birmingham Road to the west, hedgerow and the Area of Development Restraint ALVE7 to the south and hedgerow to the east.

### **3.94 Site Assessment**

### **3.95 Site History**

- 3.96 The site was promoted as a possible ADR by developers at the Inquiry into the Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan. The Inspector did not support the site and considered that the eastern boundary is not clearly defined but entirely arbitrary. This lack of a clear and defensible boundary is a significant drawback and would be pressure for further development to the east resulting in urban sprawl (Inspector's Report, 2001, p.164)

### **3.97 Green Belt**

- 3.98 The site is within the designated Green Belt and therefore it is important to consider the Green Belt function of the site. The site is bounded by the motorway to the north, Birmingham road to the west and part of ALVE7 to the south. Site visit shows that there is a thick hedgerow along the east which could act as a Green Belt boundary but the hedgerow in the southeast is sparse. Also there is a new fence and newly planted hedge across the middle to separate the site into two. Development here may potentially lead to urban sprawl into the countryside.

### **3.99 Flood Risk**

- 3.100 Next to the eastern boundary of the site is Flood Zone 2 and 3 of the River Arrow. Part of the southern boundary of the site is an ordinary

watercourse and site specific flood risk assessment would be required to assess the risk of flooding within the site.

### **3.101 Visual Appraisal**

3.102 The site has a very gradual gradient from west to east and has an embankment along motorway bordered by trees. The site can be clearly seen from Birmingham Road as the hedgerow along the west is sparse and low. There is also a footpath that dissects the site, creating a view of the entire site. Also, the school is visible from the east of the site.

### **3.103 Landscape Sensitivity**

3.104 The landscape in this area is of high sensitivity<sup>22</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of high sensitivity means that developments have to be designed carefully to ensure that the effect on landscape character is minimised.

### **3.105 Agricultural Land Quality**

3.106 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England, it appears that there is a fair chance that the land is the best and most versatile (20.1 to 60% likelihood). The more detailed survey of the agricultural land quality shows that the land falls primarily within grade 3a<sup>23</sup>. However, a significant proportion of the land in the District falls within grades 1, 2 and 3 meaning that some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis the loss of grade 3a agricultural land is not considered to be unduly harmful.

### **3.107 Historic Environment**

3.108 The site falls within the Hopwood HECZ<sup>24</sup> and the historic environment in this zone is of medium sensitivity<sup>25</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for

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<sup>22</sup> Landscape Sensitivity Map is produced by Worcestershire County Council and is reproduced in the Green Infrastructure Baseline Report.

<sup>23</sup> Information obtained from the Post 88 Agricultural Land Classification survey GIS layer provided by Natural England

<sup>24</sup> Bromsgrove Historic Environment Assessment 2010

development to occur in low sensitivity areas, historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

- 3.109 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **3.110 Green Infrastructure**

- 3.111 Around 150m away from the site is the River Arrow, which is a SWS<sup>26</sup>. The SWS habitat is open water – flowing, which means maintaining/ improving the existing water quality is crucial if the SWS habitat is to be protected. The “coniferous woodland” next to the River Arrow is listed in the National Inventory of Woodlands and Trees of Forestry Commission. “Coniferous woodland” is a priority habitat in the UK and Worcestershire BAP.

- 3.112 The site is bounded by some hedgerows which is one of the key characteristics of the Principal Timbered Woodland landscape type<sup>27</sup>.

- 3.113 The medium ratings of the amenity value<sup>28</sup> and potential score<sup>29</sup> of this HECZ zone shows that the site could have limited contributions towards defining local distinctiveness and sense of place and that it is possible that additional/ high quality historic environment features are presence. An archaeological survey is likely to be required to fully assess this issue.

- 3.114 The site is crossed by a public footpath.

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<sup>25</sup> Sensitivity score of the Hopwood HECZ is 2.

<sup>26</sup> SWS Reference: SO06/18

<sup>27</sup> Information obtained from the online Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment.

<sup>28</sup> Amenity value score of the Hopwood HECZ is 2.

<sup>29</sup> Potential score of the Hopwood HECZ is 2.

### **3.115 Sustainability**

3.116 The proposed site is just 250m away from the nearest school and bus stop and under 800m away from the majority of local services. The nearest railway station is around 1600m away. Based on the 800m walking distance assumption, apart from the railway station, all facilities are within walking distance. All facilities are therefore within short cycling and driving distance.

### **3.117 Summary**

3.118 The site is well located and is within walking distance to most facilities; however the Green Belt boundary of the site is not clearly defined and the lack of a defensible boundary means that there could be sprawl into the wider countryside. On this basis, the site is currently unsuitable to contribute to the delivery of new housing development.

### **3.119 2013 Update**

3.120 The site has been promoted through the SHLAA as:

- Birmingham Road, Alvechurch (BDC151)

3.121 The site is not currently considered to be suitable for development due to its Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.



## **Area 5: Land to the east of Birmingham Road and north of Old Rectory Lane (ALVE7)**

### **3.122 Site Description**

3.123 The site is approximately 1 hectare and falls within an Area of Development Restraint. It is situated on the north-eastern side of the settlement and is located to the east of Birmingham Road and north of Old Rectory Lane. It is bounded by hedgerow to the north and a tree-lined hedgerow and small stream to the east.

### **3.124 Site Assessment**

### **3.125 Site History**

3.126 The site was considered as a suitable ADR at the Inquiry of the Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan. The Inspector considered that:  
*the site “has clear and readily recognisable boundaries of field margins, with a tree-lined hedgerow and small stream running along the eastern side...the site has a somewhat restricted depth relative to its main road frontage... (which) reflects the nature and limits of existing residential development along sections of Birmingham Road and Old Rectory Lane... in the context of the need for some land, (the allocation would) not be materially harmful to Green Belt purposes” (Inspector’s Report, 2001, p.160-1).*

### **3.127 Green Belt**

3.128 Whilst the site is no longer in the Green Belt it is important to consider the wider Green Belt implications of developing the site. The site has well defensible boundaries with hedgerows to the north and east and roads to the south and west. The boundaries can be seen as logical defensible boundaries and development will result in limited encroachment into the countryside.

### **3.129 Flood Risk**

3.130 The site is bounded by an ordinary watercourse to the north and east. specific flood risk assessment would be required to assess the risk of flooding within the site.

### **3.131 Visual Appraisal**

3.132 The site is flat and has thick tree-lined hedgerow along the west, south and east boundaries. There are also a number of trees along the northern boundary. Views into the site are limited to short distance views from Old Rectory Lane.

### **3.133 Landscape Sensitivity**

3.134 The landscape in this area is of high sensitivity<sup>30</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of high sensitivity means that developments have to be designed carefully to ensure that the effect on landscape character is minimised.

### **3.135 Agricultural Land Quality**

3.136 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England, it appears that there is a fair chance that the land is the best and most versatile (20.1 to 60% likelihood). Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development, there are significant amounts of land with some prospects of high quality agricultural land present across the District. On this basis, agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **3.137 Historic Environment**

3.138 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ<sup>31</sup> and the historic environment in this zone is of medium sensitivity<sup>32</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

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<sup>30</sup> Landscape Sensitivity Map is produced by Worcestershire County Council and is reproduced in the Green Infrastructure Baseline Report

<sup>31</sup> Bromsgrove Historic Environment Assessment 2010

<sup>32</sup> Sensitivity score of the Lickey and Blackwell, Alvechurch and Barnt Green HECZ is 2.

3.139 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **3.140 Green Infrastructure**

3.141 Around 300m away from the site is the River Arrow, which is a SWS<sup>33</sup>. The SWS habitat is open water – flowing, which means maintaining/ improving the existing water quality is crucial if the SWS habitat is to be protected. The “coniferous woodland” next to the River Arrow is listed in the National Inventory of Woodlands and Trees of Forestry Commission. “Coniferous woodland” is also a priority habitat in the UK and Worcestershire BAP. The site contains ‘possibly unimproved grassland’<sup>34</sup>. A survey may be required to check the biodiversity value of the ‘possibly unimproved grassland’ area.

3.142 The site is bounded by some hedgerows which is one of the key characteristics of the Principal Timbered Woodland landscape type<sup>35</sup>. The site is crossed by a public footpath and bounded by an ordinary watercourse to the east.

3.143 The amenity value<sup>36</sup> of this HECZ zone shows that the site does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. The potential score<sup>37</sup> though shows that the likelihood for the presence of additional/ high quality historic environment features in the zone is high. An archaeological survey is likely to be required to fully assess this issue.

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<sup>33</sup> SWS Reference: SO 06/18

<sup>34</sup> Information from Worcestershire Habitat Inventory

<sup>35</sup> Information obtained from the online Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment.

<sup>36</sup> Amenity value score of the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ is 1.

<sup>37</sup> Potential score of the Lickey and Blackwell, Alvechurch and Barnt Green HECZ is 3.

### **3.144 Sustainability**

3.145 The proposed site is located on the main Birmingham Road, adjacent to the bus stop and local school. It is around 600m away from the majority of local services and 1500m away from the railway station. Based on the 800m walking distance assumption, apart from the railway station, all facilities are within walking distance.

### **3.146 Summary**

3.147 The site is well located and is within the walking distance to most facilities. Together with the defensible boundary and limited encroachment into the countryside, the site is considered to be suitable for development.

### **3.148 2013 Update**

3.149 The site has been promoted through the SHLAA as:

- Land fronting Birmingham Road (BDC170)

3.150 Since this time there has been a resolution to grant outline planning permission (13/0026) for 25 dwellings, subject to the signing of a S106 agreement. A range of detailed studies were submitted with the planning application to highlight the limited nature of any constraints on the site. A reserved matter application is expected within the near future once the S106 has been signed.

## **Area 6: Alvechurch and Hopwood Cricket Club**

### **3.151 Site Description**

3.152 The site is approximately 1.4 hectares in size and falls within the Green Belt. It is situated on the north-eastern side of the settlement. The site covers the cricket ground of Alvechurch and Hopwood Cricket Club and part of the Wiggin Memorial Playing Field. The site is bounded by existing residential area to the west and south, the local school to the north and some hedgerow trees to the east.

### **3.153 Site Assessment**

### **3.154 Site History**

3.155 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **3.156 Green Belt**

3.157 The site is within the designated Green Belt and therefore it is necessary to consider the Green Belt function of the site. This site has a tree-lined hedgerow and small stream running along the eastern side, which formed a clear and easily recognisable boundary. The site is bounded by existing development to the other three sides. Development here will be noticeable to users of the footpath to the east and would lead to some encroachment into the Green Belt.

### **3.158 Flood Risk**

3.159 The site is bounded by an ordinary watercourse in the east. A site specific flood risk assessment would be required to assess the risk of flooding within the site.

### **3.160 Visual Appraisal**

3.161 The site is in the rear of the properties fronting Birmingham Road to the west and Meadow Lane to the south, hence it is not visible from the two roads. To the north is the Alvechurch School which has the same

depth to the main road frontage as this site. Though there is a hedgerow along the eastern boundary, development here will be noticeable to users of the footpath to the east.

### **3.162 Landscape Sensitivity**

3.163 The landscape in this area is of high sensitivity<sup>38</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of high sensitivity means that developments have to be designed carefully to ensure that the effect on landscape character is minimised.

### **3.164 Agricultural Land Quality**

3.165 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England, it appears that there is a fair chance that the land is the best and most versatile (20.1 to 60% likelihood). Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development, there are significant amounts of land with some prospects of high quality agricultural land present across the District. On this basis, agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **3.166 Historic Environment**

3.167 The site is adjacent to a listed building (17 Meadow Lane) and adjoins the northern end of the Alvechurch Conservation Area. Any development would need to be carefully designed to ensure that the setting of these historic assets is not compromised.

3.168 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ<sup>39</sup> and the historic environment in this zone is of medium sensitivity<sup>40</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

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<sup>38</sup> Landscape Sensitivity Map is produced by Worcestershire County Council and is reproduced in the Green Infrastructure Baseline Report.

<sup>39</sup> Bromsgrove Historic Environment Assessment 2010

<sup>40</sup> Sensitivity score of the Lickey and Blackwell, Alvechurch and Barnt Green HECZ is 2

### **3.169 Green Infrastructure**

- 3.170 Part of the Wiggin Memorial Playing Fields is a SWS<sup>41</sup>. The SWS habitat is grassland marshland. Part of the site contains 'possibly unimproved grassland'<sup>42</sup>. A survey may be required to check the biodiversity value of the 'possibly unimproved grassland' area.
- 3.171 The site is bounded by hedgerow trees which is one of the key characteristics of the Principal Timbered Woodland landscape type<sup>43</sup>.
- 3.172 The site is bounded by an ordinary watercourse to the east and has a footpath next to it.
- 3.173 The amenity value<sup>44</sup> of this HECZ zone shows that the site does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. The potential score<sup>45</sup> though shows that the likelihood for the presence of additional/ high quality historic environment features in the zone is high. An archaeological survey is likely to be required to fully assess this issue.
- 3.174 The site includes the cricket ground of the Alvechurch and Hopwood Cricket Club which is also identified as part of the Wiggin Memorial Playing Fields. The cricket ground/ playing fields is categorised as Outdoor Sports Facilities in the PPG17 Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities Assessment. The loss of such facilities would reduce access to outdoor sports facilities for residents within Alvechurch.

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<sup>41</sup> SWS Reference: SP 07/08

<sup>42</sup> Information from Worcestershire Habitat Inventory

<sup>43</sup> Information obtained from the online Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment.

<sup>44</sup> Amenity value score of the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ is 1.

<sup>45</sup> Potential score of the Lickey and Blackwell, Alvechurch and Barnt Green HECZ is 3.



### **3.175 Sustainability**

3.176 The proposed site is less than 300m away from the majority of local services, bus stop and local school. The nearest railway station is around 1200m away. Base on the 800m walking distance assumption, the school, the bus stop and the local services are all within walking distance.

### **3.177 Summary**

3.178 The site is well located and is within walking distance to most facilities. The site also has a clear defensible boundary although there could still be an element of sprawl into the Green Belt. However, the sports and recreational amenities found on this site are not found anywhere else in the settlement and should be protected. On this basis the site is not suitable to contribute to the initial housing target within the district.

### **3.179 2013 Update**

3.180 Excluding the Alvechurch and Hopwood Cricket Club section, the site has been promoted through the SHLAA as:

- .2 Birmingham Road, land rear of (BDC190)

3.181 The site is not currently considered to be suitable for development due to its Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

## **Area 7: Land to the east of Swan Street**

### **3.182 Site Description**

3.183 The site is approximately 7.6 hectares in size and falls within the Green Belt. It is situated on the south-eastern side of the settlement. The site is bounded by some hedgerow trees to the north, River Arrow to the east, an un-named road to the south and Swan Street to the west.

### **3.184 Site Assessment**

### **3.185 Site History**

3.186 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **3.187 Green Belt**

3.188 The site is within the designated Green Belt and therefore it is important to consider the Green Belt function of the site. The River Arrow runs along the eastern side and an un-named road and public rights of way lies along the southern side of the site, which formed clear and easily recognisable boundaries. However, development of this scale could lead to significant sprawl into the wider Green Belt.

### **3.189 Flood Risk**

3.190 Flood Zone 2 and 3 of the River Arrow border the northern and eastern boundaries of the site. A site specific flood risk assessment would be required to assess the risk of flooding within the site.

### **3.191 Visual Appraisal**

3.192 The site slopes from west to east and has trees and small wooded areas to the north. The site is visible from the bridleway to the south as the site is only bounded by a low hedgerow. There is some visibility of the site from the A441, where the bridleway goes underneath but tree cover restricts the majority. But as one go further along the bridleway

to the other side of the A441, there are clear long distance views of the site and development here will appear separate from the rest of the village.

### **3.193 Landscape Sensitivity**

3.194 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity<sup>46</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some changes if designed properly.

### **3.195 Agricultural Land Quality**

3.196 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England, it appears that there is a fair chance that the land is the best and most versatile (20.1 to 60% likelihood). The more detailed survey of the agricultural land quality shows that the land falls primarily within grade 3a<sup>47</sup>. However, a significant proportion of the land in the District falls within grades 1, 2 and 3 meaning that some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis the loss of grade 3a agricultural land is not considered to be unduly harmful.

### **3.197 Historic Environment**

3.198 The Old Fish Pond is a scheduled monument and fall within the site. Any development would need to protect the setting of this historic asset.

3.199 The site falls within the Hewell Grange, Bordesley and Alvechurch Parks HECZ<sup>48</sup> and the historic environment in this zone is of medium sensitivity<sup>49</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

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<sup>46</sup> Landscape Sensitivity Map is produced by Worcestershire County Council and is re-produced in the Green Infrastructure Baseline Report.

<sup>47</sup> Information obtained from the Post 88 Agricultural Land Classification survey GIS layer provided by Natural England

<sup>48</sup> Bromsgrove Historic Environment Assessment 2010

<sup>49</sup> Sensitivity score of the Hewell Grange, Bordesley & Alvechurch Parks HECZ is 2.

### **3.200 Green Infrastructure**

- 3.201 The River Arrow and the Old Fish Pond, that form the eastern boundary and lie next to the northern boundary of the site, are both SWSs<sup>50</sup>. Neutral semi-improved grassland and open water- flowing are the SWS habitats of the River Arrow SWS and the Old Fish Pond SWS.
- 3.202 Most of the site is 'arable land'<sup>51</sup>, which is a priority habitat in the UK and Worcestershire BAP.
- 3.203 The site is currently used as a farmland which is one of the key characteristics of the Wooded Estate lands landscape type<sup>52</sup>.
- 3.204 The amenity value<sup>53</sup> of this HECZ zone shows that the site has limited contributions towards defining local distinctiveness and sense of place from historic environment point of view. The potential score<sup>54</sup> shows that a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey is likely to be required to fully assess this issue.
- 3.205 There is a footpath to the south of the site.

### **3.206 Sustainability**

- 3.207 The proposed site is less than 300m away from the majority of local services and a bus stop and the local school and railway station are around 800m away. If 800m is considered as the average distance people are willing to walk to, all facilities are within walking distance and short cycling and driving distance.

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<sup>50</sup> River Arrow SWS Reference: SP 06/18; Old Fish Pond SWS Reference: SP 07/09

<sup>51</sup> Information from Worcestershire Habitat Inventory

<sup>52</sup> Information obtained from the online Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment.

<sup>53</sup> Amenity value score of the Hewell Grange, Bordesley & Alvechurch Park HECZ is 2.

<sup>54</sup> Potential score of the Hewell Grange, Bordesley & Alvechurch Park HECZ is 3.

### **3.208 Summary**

3.209 The site is well located and is accessible within walking distance to all local facilities. However, development could cause significant encroachment into the wider Green Belt. This reason indicates that the site is currently unsuitable to contribute to the delivery of new housing.

### **3.210 2013 Update**

3.211 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

## **Area 8: Land to the south of School Lane**

### **3.212 Site Description**

3.213 The site is approximately 4.2 hectare and falls within the Green Belt. It is situated on the south of the settlement. The site is bounded by existing development to the north and east, Station Road and School Lane to the west and some hedgerows to the south.

### **3.214 Site Assessment**

### **3.215 Site History**

3.216 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **3.217 Green Belt**

3.218 The site is within the designated Green Belt and therefore it is important to consider the Green Belt function of the site. The site is bounded by properties and Redditch Road to the north and east, Station Road along the west, and hedgerows and mature trees along part of the southern boundary. The lack of a clear and defensible boundary in the south may result in sprawl into the wider Green Belt.

### **3.219 Flood Risk**

3.220 There is no record of flooding within the site.

### **3.221 Visual Appraisal**

3.222 The site rises sharply before sloping from west to east and with the hedges running along Station Road, there is limited view of the site from there. There is dense woodland in the east and due to the topography of the site; it cannot be viewed from Redditch Road. However, the site can be seen from a distance by users of the footpath near the railway.

### **3.223 Landscape Sensitivity**

3.224 The landscape in this area is of high sensitivity<sup>55</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of high sensitivity means that developments have to be designed carefully to ensure that the effect on landscape character is minimised.

### **3.225 Agricultural Land Quality**

3.226 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England, it appears that there is a fair chance that the land is the best and most versatile (20.1 to 60% likelihood). The land falls primarily within grade 3<sup>56</sup>. However, a significant proportion of the land in the District falls within grades 1, 2 and 3 meaning that some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis the loss of grade 3 agricultural land is not considered to be unduly harmful.

### **3.227 Historic Environment**

3.228 Adjacent to the site is the Alvechurch Conservation Area. Any development would need to protect the setting of the Conversation Area.

3.229 The site falls within the Hewell Grange, Bordesley and Alvechurch Parks HECZ<sup>57</sup> and the historic environment in this zone is of medium sensitivity<sup>58</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

### **3.330 Green Infrastructure**

3.331 The site contains 'possibly unimproved grassland' and 'broadleaved woodland'. The 'broadleaved woodland' is a priority habitat in the UK

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<sup>55</sup> Landscape Sensitivity Map is produced by Worcestershire County Council and is re-produced in the Green Infrastructure Baseline Report

<sup>56</sup> Information obtained from the Post 88 Agricultural Land Classification survey GIS layer provided by Natural England. Part of the land is Grade 3a and part Grade 3b.

<sup>57</sup> Bromsgrove Historic Environment Assessment 2010

<sup>58</sup> Sensitivity score of the Hewell Grange, Bordesley & Alvechurch Parks HECZ is 2.

and Worcestershire BAP. A survey may be required to check the biodiversity value of the 'possibly unimproved grassland' area.

3.332 Some hedgerows are found in the site which contributes to the characteristics of the Wooded Estate lands landscape type<sup>59</sup>.

3.333 The amenity value<sup>60</sup> of this HECZ zone shows that the site has limited contributions towards defining local distinctiveness and sense of place from historic environment point of view. The potential score<sup>61</sup> shows that a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey is likely to be required to fully assess this issue.

### **3.334 Sustainability**

3.335 The proposed site is around 600m away from the majority of local services and bus stop and the nearest railway station, whereas the school is around 1100m away. Based on the 800m walking distance assumption, apart from the school, the majority of local services, bus stop and railway station are all within walking distance.

### **3.336 Summary**

3.337 The site is within walking distance to most facilities. However, there is no clearly defensible boundary that can prevent development encroaching into the countryside. To keep with character of the nearby conservation area and to protect the 'broadleaved woodland' (UK and Worcestershire BAP priority habitat) in the site may mean that only limited housing could be delivered. . These reasons indicate that the site is currently unsuitable to contribute to the delivery of new development.

### **3.338 2013 Update**

3.339 Most part of the site has been promoted through the SHLAA as:

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<sup>59</sup> Information obtained from the online Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment.

<sup>60</sup> Amenity value score of the Hewell Grange, Bordesley & Alvechurch Park HECZ is 2.

<sup>61</sup> Potential score of the Hewell Grange, Bordesley & Alvechurch Park HECZ is 3.



- Land West of Redditch Road (BDC197)

3.340 The site is not currently considered to be suitable for development due to its Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

## **Area 9: Land to the south of Station Road**

### **3.341 Site Description**

3.342 The site is approximately 8 hectares in size and falls within the Green Belt. It is situated on the south of the settlement. The site is bounded by Station Road to the north, some hedgerow trees to the south, some hedges/ existing field pattern to the northeast and southeast, and the railway to the west.

### **3.343 Site Assessment**

#### **3.344 Site History**

3.345 The site was promoted as a possible ADR by developers at the Inquiry into the Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan. The Inspector did not support the site stating:

*“Station Road forms a clear dividing line between the extensively built up area to the north and the mainly undeveloped countryside to the south. As such, it represents a strong, readily defensible Green Belt boundary. The open nature of the... site can readily be appreciated when viewed from Station Road... It fulfils important Green Belt functions of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, inhibiting unrestricted sprawl and preserving the setting of the village”*  
(Inspector’s Report, 2001, p.52)

#### **3.346 Green Belt**

3.347 The site is within the designated Green Belt and therefore it is important to consider the Green Belt function of the site. The site is bounded by the railway to the west, Station Road to the north, trees and hedgerows to the south. However, there is a lack of defensible boundary in the north east section of the site meaning that there could be sprawl into the wider countryside.

#### **3.348 Flood Risk**

3.349 There is no record of flooding within the site.

### **3.350 Visual Appraisal**

3.351 The northwest section of the site is flat and the northeast section slopes upwards to the east. The southern section rises south to the middle of the site before sloping down again towards the boundary. The site is dissected by a footpath from Station Road to the railway station and there is clear view of the site from the footpath. Though the site cannot be seen from the railway station carpark due to the thick hedge, site can be seen from distance further east and north. Development here would be prominent from the wider countryside.

### **3.352 Landscape Sensitivity**

3.353 The landscape in this area is of high sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of high sensitivity means that developments have to be designed carefully to ensure that the effect on landscape character is minimised.

### **3.354 Agricultural Land Quality**

3.355 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England, it appears that there is a fair chance that the land is the best and most versatile (20.1 to 60% likelihood). The more detailed survey of the agricultural land quality shows that the land falls primarily within grade 3b<sup>62</sup>. However, a significant proportion of the land in the District falls within grades 1, 2 and 3 meaning that some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis the loss of grade 3b agricultural land is not considered to be unduly harmful.

### **3.356 Historic Environment**

3.357 The site falls within the Hewell Grange, Bordesley and Alvechurch Parks HECZ<sup>63</sup> and the historic environment in this zone is of medium sensitivity<sup>64</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in

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<sup>62</sup> Information obtained from the Post 88 Agricultural Land Classification survey GIS layer provided by Natural England.

<sup>63</sup> Bromsgrove Historic Environment Assessment 2010

<sup>64</sup> Sensitivity score of the Hewell Grange, Bordesley & Alvechurch Parks HECZ is 2

low sensitivity areas, historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

3.358 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **3.359 Green Infrastructure**

3.360 The site contains 'possibly unimproved grassland' and 'arable land'<sup>65</sup>. 'Arable land' is a priority habitat in the UK and Worcestershire BAP. A survey may be required to check the biodiversity value of the 'possibly unimproved grassland' area.

3.361 Part of the site is currently used as farmland which is one of the key characteristics of the Wooded Estate lands landscape type<sup>66</sup>. Some hedgerows are found in the site which contributes to the landscape character too.

3.362 The amenity value<sup>67</sup> of this HECZ zone shows that the site has limited contributions towards defining local distinctiveness and sense of place from a historic environment point of view. The potential score<sup>68</sup> shows that a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey is likely to be required to fully assess this issue.

3.363 The site is crossed by a public footpath.

### **3.364 Sustainability**

3.365 The proposed site is approximately 600m away from the majority of local services and bus stop, and the nearest railway station is just beside the site. The local school is around 1100m away. Based on the 800m walking distance assumption, apart from the local school, the

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<sup>65</sup> Information from Worcestershire Habitat Inventory

<sup>66</sup> Information obtained from the online Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment.

<sup>67</sup> Amenity value score of the Hewell Grange, Bordesley & Alvechurch Park HECZ is 2.

<sup>68</sup> Potential score of the Hewell Grange, Bordesley & Alvechurch Park HECZ is 3.

majority of local services, bus stop and railway station are all within walking distance. Although most facilities are within walking/ short cycling distance from the site, the steep topography may discourage people from doing so.

### **3.366 Summary**

3.367 Although the site is within walking distance to the majority of local facilities, the topography may discourage people from walking. There are concerns that the lack of a defensible boundary to the north east of the site means that there could be sprawl into the wider Green Belt. On this basis the site is currently unsuitable to contribute to the delivery of the initial housing target.

### **3.368 2013 Update**

3.369 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

## **Area 10: Alvechurch Brickworks**

### **3.370 Site Description**

3.371 The site is approximately 2.3 hectares in size and falls within the Green Belt. It is situated on the western edge of the village and is separated from the village by the Birmingham Worcester Canal and a narrow field and an embanked section of the railway. It is bounded by the Canal to the east and enclosed by wooded cliffs up to 20m in height that screen the site from the north, south and west.

### **3.372 Site Assessment**

### **3.373 Site History**

3.374 The site was promoted as a possible ADR at the Inquiry into the Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan, which was opposed by the Council as the settlement is located to the east of the railway which forms a clear and defensible boundary of the Green Belt. However, the Inspector took a different view and considered:

*“a precedent of sorts has already been set by the Council in not a dissimilar circumstances, through the proposed designation of the (land adjacent to the former Wagon Works, Bromsgrove)”* (Inspector’s Report, 2001, P.21).

3.375 The Inspector also considered that:

*“development of the site would not result in coalescence of Alvechurch with any other settlement, neither would it cause sprawl of a larger built-up area. The site is well-contained with strong defensible boundaries that limit encroachment into the countryside and minimise any loss of openness”* (Inspector’s Report, 2001, p.20).

3.377 An application on the site was submitted after the Inspector’s Report (2001) and the application was called in by the Secretary of States in 2003 as the recommendation was contrary to the national policy PPG2.

The Inspector of the Appeal (APP/P1805/V/03/1113102) considered that:

*“the existing storage on the site can only be glimpsed from public viewpoints. While the amount of open storage on the site could increase... the construction of houses as proposed would be significantly more visually intrusive as the dwellings would hide part of the banks of the trees and increase the visibility of the site. The houses would be visible from the canal and the tow path... The site would have the appearance of a housing estate set in the countryside and... this would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area as well as the openness of the Green Belt.”*

3.378 The Inspector of the Appeal concluded that the necessary very special circumstances were not available to outweigh the harm that would result from the development in the Green Belt.

3.379 As the Council believed that sufficient ADR provision already exists at Alvechurch at the time and had significant concerns that allocation of the site would result in development beyond the railway line and canal to the west of the village, which has historically defined the major development limits of the settlement, the site was designated as Green Belt land in the adopted Bromsgrove Local Plan 2004.

### **3.380 Green Belt**

3.381 The site is within the designated Green Belt and therefore it is important to consider the Green Belt function of the site. The site is bounded by the canal to the east and enclosed by wooded cliffs to the north, south and west. However, the village locates to the east of the railway which forms a clear and defensible boundary of the Green Belt. Developing the site could lead to encroachment into the countryside and development may appear as a housing estate in the countryside rather than an extension to the settlement of Alvechurch.

### **3.382 Flood Risk**

3.383 The site is next to the Birmingham and Worcester canal and there is no historic flooding record for this part of the canal.

### **3.384 Visual Appraisal**

3.385 The site is relatively flat, particularly in the centre. Due to the limited number of trees, the site is clearly visible from the canal towpath. The site is surrounded by a wooded cliff and therefore is not visible from other areas.

### **3.386 Landscape Sensitivity**

3.387 The landscape in this area is of high sensitivity<sup>69</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of high sensitivity means that developments have to be designed carefully to ensure that the effect on landscape character is minimised.

### **3.388 Agricultural Land Quality**

3.389 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England, it appears that there is a fair chance that the land is the best and most versatile (20.1 to 60% likelihood). Given that a significant proportion of the land in the District has a higher percentage or same likelihood of being the BMV, the loss of this land is not considered to be unduly harmful.

### **3.390 Historic Environment**

3.391 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HERZ<sup>70</sup> and the historic environment in this zone is of medium sensitivity<sup>71</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

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<sup>69</sup> Landscape Sensitivity Map is produced by Worcestershire County Council and is reproduced in the Green Infrastructure Baseline Report.

<sup>70</sup> Bromsgrove Historic Environment Assessment 2010.

<sup>71</sup> Sensitivity score of the Lickey and Blackwell, Alvechurch and Barnt Green HECZ is 2.



3.392 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **3.393 Green Infrastructure**

3.394 The Worcester and Birmingham canal that forms part of the site boundary is a SWS<sup>72</sup>. The SWS habitat is open water – flowing marshland reedbeds.

3.395 The Birmingham and Worcester canal is an important recreational resource. Development in the site will be noticeable to canal users.

3.396 The site contains ‘broadleaved woodland’ which is a priority habitats in the UK and Worcestershire BAP. The site is bounded by some hedgerow trees and a small wooded area, both are key characteristics of the Principal Timbered Woodland landscape type<sup>73</sup>.

3.397 The amenity value<sup>74</sup> of this HECZ zone shows that the site does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. The potential score<sup>75</sup> though shows that the likelihood for the presence of additional/ high quality historic environment features in the zone is high. An archaeological survey is likely to be required to fully assess this issue.

### **3.398 Sustainability**

3.399 The proposed site is approximately 250m away from the railway station and around 1100m away from the majority of local services and bus stop. The local school is around 1600m away. Based on the 800m walking distance assumption, only the railway station is within walking

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<sup>72</sup> SWS Reference: SO96/19

<sup>73</sup> Information obtained from the online Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment.

<sup>74</sup> Amenity value score of the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ is 1.

<sup>75</sup> Potential score of the Lickey and Blackwell, Alvechurch and Barnt Green HECZ is 3.

distance. Though all facilities are within short cycling distance, the steep topography may put people off from cycling.

### **3.400 Summary**

3.401 Except for the railway station, the site is not within walking distance to all facilities. The railway line forms a clear and defensible boundary to the existing settlement and developing the site would result in development encroaching into the countryside and would be particularly noticeable to users of the Birmingham and Worcester canal and the towpath. These reasons indicate that the site is currently unsuitable to contribute to the delivery of new housing.

### **3.402 2013 Update**

3.403 The site has been promoted through the SHLAA as:

- The Oldbrick Works, Scarfield Hill (BDC58)

3.404 The site is not currently considered to be suitable for development due to its Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

## **Area 11: Land to the west of the Railway**

### **3.405 Site Description**

3.406 The site is approximately 3.2 hectares in size and falls within the Green Belt. It is situated on the western edge of the village and is separated from the village by the railway. It is bounded by the railway to the northwest, north, east and southeast, Scarfield Hill to the south, and the Canal to the southwest, west and northwest. The site is also bisected by Withybed Lane.

### **3.407 Site Assessment**

### **3.408 Site History**

3.409 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan in relation to the adopted Local Plan. However, when the Alvechurch Brickworks (i.e. Area 10) was considered at the Inquiry into the Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan, the Inspector pointed out that this site: *“provides an attractive setting to the canal and an obvious visual amenity. The canal is an important recreation resource, with a large boat-hire marina situated nearby just to the south of Scarfield Hill bridge. In these circumstances I feel it would be appropriate to invoke a new strategic open space policy designed to protect the land from inappropriate built development.”* (Inspector’s Report, 2001, p.21)

### **3.410 Green Belt**

3.411 The site is within the designated Green Belt and therefore it is important to consider the Green Belt function of the site. The village is located to the east of the railway which forms a clear and defensible boundary to the Green Belt. Developing the site will encroach into the countryside and potentially cause sprawl into the wider countryside.

### **3.412 Flood Risk**

3.413 The site is next to the Birmingham and Worcester canal and there is no historic flooding record for this part of the canal.

### **3.414 Visual Appraisal**

3.415 The site is a relatively flat narrow strip of land which has a steep embankment along the east for the railway. To the south of the site is a wooded area and there is limited view of the site from Scarfield Hill. However, the site can be viewed from a number of points along the towpath. As it is dissected by Withybed Lane, it is also visible from this location.

### **3.416 Landscape Sensitivity**

3.417 The landscape in this area is of low sensitivity<sup>76</sup>, which means the area is resilient to change.

### **3.418 Agricultural Land Quality**

3.419 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England, it does not appear that the land is likely to be the best of most versatile land (less than 20% likelihood). On this basis, the best and most versatile land is not an undue constraint on development.

### **3.420 Historic Environment**

3.421 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ<sup>77</sup> and the historic environment in this zone is of medium sensitivity<sup>78</sup>. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

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<sup>76</sup> Landscape Sensitivity Map is produced by Worcestershire County Council and is re-produced in the Green Infrastructure Baseline Report.

<sup>77</sup> Bromsgrove Historic Environment Assessment 2010

<sup>78</sup> Sensitivity score of the Lickey and Blackwell, Alvechurch and Barnt Green HECZ is 2.

3.422 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **3.423 Green Infrastructure**

3.424 The Birmingham and Worcester canal that forms part of the site boundary is a SWS<sup>79</sup>. The SWS habitat is open water – flowing marshland reedbeds.

3.425 The site contains ‘possibly unimproved grassland’ and ‘broadleaved woodland’<sup>80</sup>. The ‘broadleaved woodland’ is a priority habitat in the UK and Worcestershire BAP. Survey may be required to check the biodiversity value of the ‘possibly unimproved grassland’ area.

3.426 The Birmingham and Worcester canal is an important recreational resource, with a large boat-hire marina situated nearby just to the south of Scarfield Hill bridge. If the site is developed, it would be particularly noticeable to users of the canal and those walking and cycling on the towpath.

3.427 The site is bounded by some hedgerow trees and there is a wooded area in the south. Hedgerow trees and woodlands are both key characteristics of the Principal Timbered Woodland landscape type<sup>81</sup>.

3.428 The amenity value<sup>82</sup> of this HECZ zone shows that the site does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. The potential

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<sup>79</sup> SWS Reference: SO96/19

<sup>80</sup> Information obtained from Worcestershire Habitat Inventory.

<sup>81</sup> Information obtained from the online Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment.

<sup>82</sup> Amenity value score of the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ is 1.

score<sup>83</sup> though shows that the likelihood for the presence of additional/ high quality historic environment features in the zone is high. An archaeological survey is likely to be required to fully assess this issue.

### **3.429 Sustainability**

3.430 The proposed site is just opposite to the railway station and around 900m away from the majority of local services and bus stop. The local school is around 1400m away. Based on the 800m walking distance assumption, only the railway station is within walking distance. Though most facilities are within short cycling distance, the steep topography may discourage people from doing so.

### **3.431 Summary**

3.432 Except the railway, the site is not within walking distance to all facilities. The site contains 'broadleaved woodland' (UK and Worcestershire BAP priority habitat) which needs to be protected. The railway line forms a clear and defensible boundary to the existing settlement and developing the site would result in development encroaching into the countryside and would be particularly noticeable to users of the Birmingham and Worcester canal and the towpath. These reasons indicate that the site is currently unsuitable to contribute to the delivery of new development.

### **3.433 2013 Update**

3.434 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

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<sup>83</sup> Potential score of the Lickey and Blackwell, Alvechurch and Barnt Green HECZ is 3.

#### **4.435 Overall Conclusions for Alvechurch**

4.436 In total 11 sites have been considered around Alvechurch. In conclusion the following 2 sites have been identified as being suitable to contribute towards the initial housing target in Bromsgrove District and these are as follows:

- Area 3: Rear of Birmingham Road (ALVE 6)
- Area 5: Land to the east of Birmingham Road and north of Old Rectory Lane (ALVE7)

4.437 The SA accompanying the site assessment highlighted that these two sites performed best against the SA objectives. The areas performed well due to the close proximity to existing facilities and services, the opportunity to travel by sustainable modes and the limited nature of any environmental constraints. The SA therefore supports the outcome of the site assessment.

#### **4.438 2013 Update**

4.439 Both of these sites were subsequently included within the DCS2 which went out to consultation between January and April 2011. No major concerns were raised in relation to these sites through this consultation.

4.440 Responses were received by those who were promoting development on areas 3 and 5. They highlighted that the sites are suitable for residential development and is in a sustainable location.

4.441 Since the publication of the DCS2 planning permission for 27 dwellings on this site has been granted (11/0672) on area 3. According to the Housing Land Availability Report 2013, 7 dwellings have been completed whilst 20 dwellings are still under construction.

4.442 There has also been a resolution to grant outline planning permission (13/0026) for 25 dwellings, subject to the signing of a S106 agreement. A range of detailed studies were submitted with the planning application to highlight the limited nature of any constraints on the site. A reserved matter application is expected within the near future once the S106 has been signed.

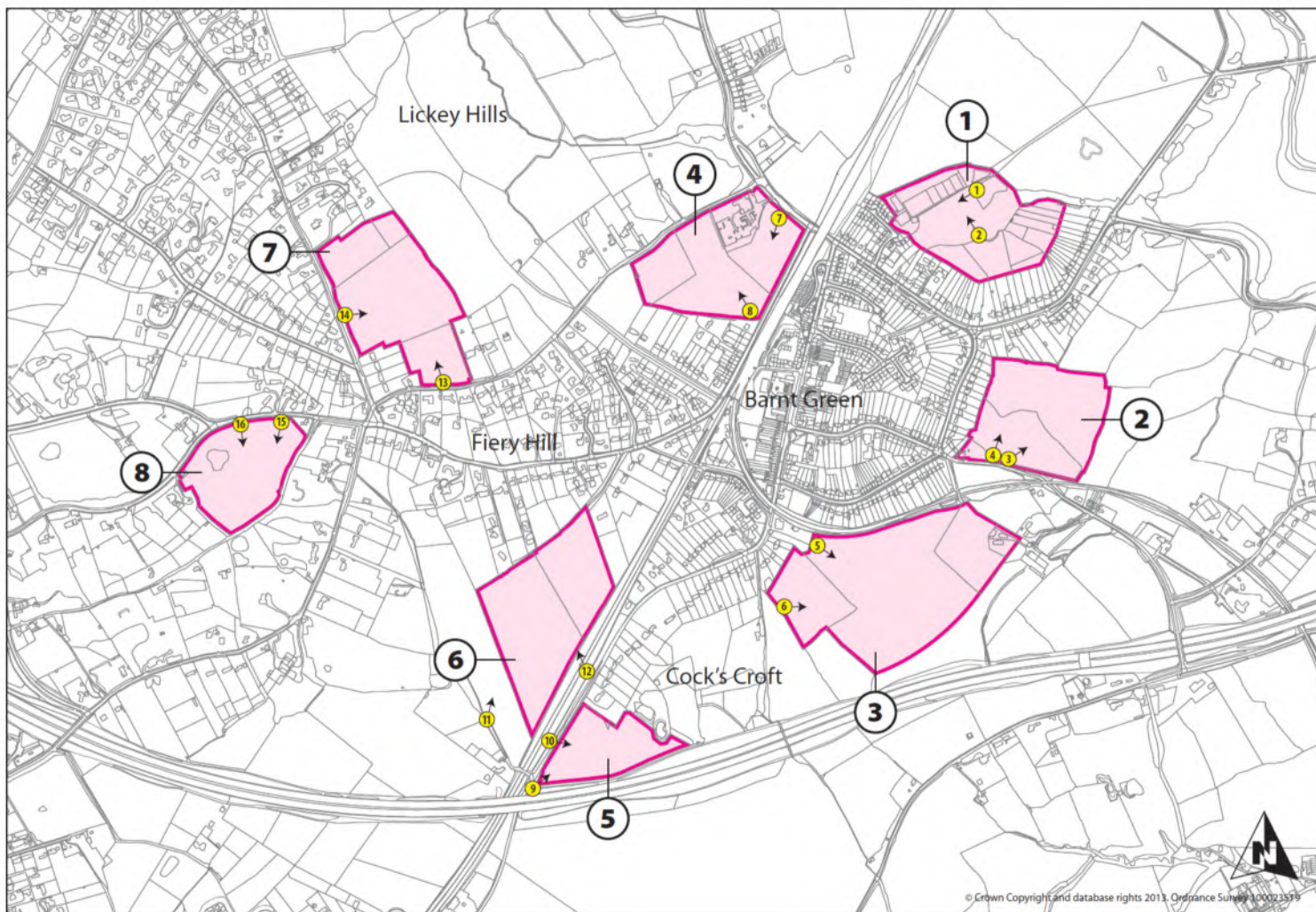


## **4. Barnt Green Assessment**

### **4.1 Introduction**

4.2 Barnt Green is a settlement and civil parish to the north of Bromsgrove District, located immediately south of Birmingham. The village has its own railway station on the Cross City line linking to Birmingham and Redditch, as well as a bus service to Bromsgrove town. There is also a range of services and facilities located along Hewell Road, including a school, dentist, doctor's surgery and a number of shops.

4.3 A total of eight possible development sites have been identified in and around the periphery of Barnt Green. Each of these sites will be assessed to determine their suitability to contribute to the delivery of 4,000 homes across the District. All sites have been visited as part of the appraisal process and a selection of photos from each site are attached at Appendix 2. All photos were taken from publicly accessible positions and the approximate locations where the photos were taken are shown on map 2 below.



Map 2: Barnt Green Areas with photo viewpoints

## **Area 1: Land to the rear (north) of Bittell Road**

### **4.4 Site Description**

- 4.5 The site is approximately 6.4 hectares in size and is located to the north east of Barnt Green. The greenfield site is largely made up of residential gardens, Barnt Green Sports Club and 'Parker's Piece' Playing Fields. The site is bounded by residential dwellings along Bittell Road to the south and east, but has no defined boundary to the north or west. A large area of the site is covered by mature and semi-mature trees.

### **4.6 Site Assessment**

### **4.7 Site History**

- 4.8 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **4.9 Green Belt**

- 4.10 The site is within the designated Green Belt and therefore it is necessary to consider the Green Belt function of the site. The development of the site would consolidate built form further north. It is not likely to cause any coalescence of neighbouring settlements, but would encroach on the open countryside. Furthermore, there is also no defensible Green Belt boundary to restrict further growth pressures which could lead to sprawl into the wider countryside.

### **4.11 Flood Risk**

- 4.12 A stream runs along the northern edge of the site and continues along the northwest corner; however the SFRA Level 1 indicates the site falls within flood zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding.

#### **4.13 Visual Appraisal**

4.14 It is clear that this site is segregated into two main uses. The southern section of the site consists of residential gardens and a large amount of private land. None of this area can be viewed from publically accessible areas due the housing fronting Bittell Road and dense vegetation forming the border with the park area. The northern section of the site is all visible and consists of 'Parker's Piece' Playing Field and Barnt Green Sports Club. The main view points of this section of the site are along the public footpath, which runs from Bittell Road across the site along the boundary of the park and sports club. There is also a hedgerow running along this boundary, separating the sports club and park. The sports club can be seen in the most north-westerly section of the site and consist of numerous tennis courts, squash courts and a hall for badminton and other indoor sports. The park itself has a small play area, a junior football pitch and a basketball net.

4.15 There are a large number of trees present on the site. There are small wooded areas present in the northern section of the park, along the northwest boundary of the site, as well as in-between the park and residential gardens. These trees restrict the view of the open countryside that exist further north, as well as restricting the view of the site from this northern area where the public footpath continues. The trees along the north section limit the views of trains along the railway and subsequently limit views of the site from those travelling on the train. As this site is set back, behind the Methodist Church, there are no views from Bittell Road.

#### **4.16 Landscape Sensitivity**

4.17 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity, which is resilient to some change. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas.

#### **4.18 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 4.19 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **4.20 Historic Environment**

- 4.21 The site contains no Listed Buildings, is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and has no other statutory historic designations.
- 4.22 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, the fact that most of the District falls within the high and medium sensitivity areas means that development in these areas is inevitable. Historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

#### **4.23 Green Infrastructure**

- 4.24 A public footpath dissects the centre of the site leading to further open countryside beyond the recreational facilities. The large number of trees throughout the site could be incorporated into green infrastructure proposals, but the sheer quantity would severely reduce the amount of land suitable for potential development. Although none are protected by tree preservation orders, the mature nature of the trees could have great biodiversity value. A large amount of green space in this area is used for recreational purposes and contains a football pitch.

- 4.25 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. However, this zone has high potential, meaning that the likelihood for the presence of additional/ high quality historic environment features in the zone is high. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.
- 4.26 According to Worcestershire's Landscape Character Assessment, this particular site is part of Cobley Hill Principal Timbered Farmlands, which is recognised for having a reasonable representation of woodland but a poor representation of hedgerow.
- 4.27 Sustainability**
- 4.28 In terms of sustainability the site performs particularly well. The proposed site is in close proximity to the local centre where the majority of local services are and the nearest school is less than 400m away. The nearest bus stop and railway station are also within a short walking distance. The Cross-City Line runs from Redditch to Lichfield, providing 30 minute intervals to these locations as well as Birmingham City Centre.
- 4.29 Development could lead to the loss of Barnt Green Sports Club and 'Parker's Piece' Playing Fields. This would greatly reduce access to sports and recreation facilities.

**4.30 Summary**

- 4.31 The site is well located in terms of local facilities and transport links; however the current uses on the site are extremely important for the residents of Barnt Green. The sports and recreational amenities found on this site are not found anywhere else in the settlement and should be protected. The large number of trees present on the site also heavily

constrains development. These reasons combined with the Green Belt function in preventing encroachment to the countryside due to a lack of a defensible Green Belt boundary indicates that this site is currently unsuitable for development.

#### **4.32 2013 Update**

- 4.33 Part of this site has been promoted through the SHLAA process. A number of properties and their residential gardens to the east, directly off Bittell Road (BDC106) were assessed. This location is currently not considered suitable for development due to its Green belt designation, however, the SHLAA identifies that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

## **Area 2: Land at Bittell Lane/Sandhills Green**

### **4.34 Site Description**

- 4.35 The site is approximately 6 hectares in size and situated east of Bittell Lane and north of Sandhills Green. These roads function as boundaries to the south and west, but the north east is predominately open countryside. The current land use is for agricultural purposes and there is also a Grade II listed building, Longmead, located adjacent to the site.

### **4.36 Site Assessment**

### **4.37 Site History**

- 4.38 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **4.39 Green Belt**

- 4.40 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and therefore it is important to consider the Green Belt function of the site. Development would lead to significant encroachment into the Green Belt east of Barnt Green. Whilst roads provide defensible boundaries to the south and large residential areas to the west, there are no defining features preventing further sprawl to the east. The village of Alvechurch is located less than 1km to the south east; therefore development in this location would reduce the gap between the two settlements and in the future could lead to coalescence.

### **4.41 Flood Risk**

- 4.42 The site is entirely within flood zone 1 and is therefore considered to have the lowest risk of flooding.



#### **4.43 Visual Appraisal**

4.44 This site is only visible along sections of Sandhills Green to the south. The rest of the area is not visible from any public rights of way as there are no footpaths on or near to the site. Dwellings along Bittell Lane form the western boundary and dwellings along Bittell Road form the northern boundary. Open countryside exists to the east that is not accessible by either cars or pedestrians. A residential garden and hedgerow forms the southern boundary, with access to the fields made via a gate on Sandhills Green. The three fields are all bounded by hedgerow that includes a large number of mature trees.

4.45 Regarding the sites topography, the land rises from north to south. It rises quite considerably and development would be particularly visible from properties that adjoin the site and from the nearby railway. Overlooking could be an issue towards the high points near Sandhills Green. The Green Belt function of the site is clearly evident from the site as to the east is a large expanse of open countryside.

#### **4.46 Landscape Sensitivity**

4.47 The landscape in this area is predominantly medium sensitivity but with the highly sensitive landscape located east of the site. Development would not usually be supported in areas of high sensitivity and therefore in landscape terms it would be preferable for development to occur west of the site. This area of medium sensitivity landscape is resilient to some change.

#### **4.48 Agricultural Land Quality**

4.49 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is

significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **4.50 Historic Environment**

There is a listed building adjacent to the south of site, in the form of Longmead, which is Grade II listed. It is a Sandstone building with a slate roof dating from 1678. Residential development would need to respect the setting of this listed building by not ruining its character, particularly as a rural farmhouse.

- 4.51 The site falls within the Hopwood HECZ. The historic environment in this zone is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, the fact that most of the District falls within the high and medium sensitivity areas means that development in these areas is inevitable. Historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

#### **4.52 Green Infrastructure**

- 4.53 The north, east and south of the site are enclosed by mature hedgerows, and there is also a line of mature hedgerow dissecting the north and south of the site. Important hedgerows and mature trees should be retained if development occurs. There are no public footpaths or water features within or near the development site. A large expanse of open countryside exists towards the east of the site and this is privately owned land.
- 4.54 The amenity value of the Hopwood HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. The medium potential score of the

zone means that the likelihood for the presence of additional/ high quality historic environment features is medium.

- 4.55 According to Worcestershire's Landscape Character Assessment, this particular site is part of Cobley Hill Principal Timbered Farmland. This type of land has localised high intensity farming which is associated with hedgerow loss; therefore any potential development would need to retain what little hedgerow currently exists.

#### **4.56 Sustainability**

- 4.57 The site is relatively sustainable with the majority of the main services and facilities within 800m of the developable area. The train station and bus services are also with walking distance.

#### **4.58 Summary**

- 4.59 Although this site is somewhat sustainable in terms of location; its Green Belt credentials heavily infringe on potential development. The large expanse of open countryside to the east has no defensible boundary to resist future growth and could prospectively lead to coalescence with the village of Alvechurch. Due to the necessary Green Belt function of this site, including restricting encroachment into the countryside and coalescence with Alvechurch; this site is not currently considered suitable for housing development.

#### **4.60 2013 Update**

- 4.61 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

### **Area 3: Land to the west of Sandhills Green**

#### **4.62 Site Description**

- 4.63 This large site is a total of approximately 13.5 hectares and situated to the west of Sandhills Green. The railway line acts as a boundary to the north and the M42 is situated slightly further to the south. Residential development is located north west of the site and the road of Sandhills Green further to the east. The land is currently in agricultural use. The site also has a steady gradient stretching from the north east to south west.

#### **4.64 Site Assessment**

#### **4.65 Site History**

- 4.66 This area of land was submitted as a possible ADR within the Local Plan process. The Inspector shared the same reservations as the Council in regards to the Green Belt functions of the site. He stated that the area of land *“assists in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and prevents neighbouring towns from merging into one another. Development here would project into the rural area surrounding Barnt Green and would increase the likelihood of future coalescence with Alvechurch”*.

- 4.67 Due to the imposing nature of the railway line to the north of the site, it appears to be somewhat segregated from Barnt Green village itself. The Local Plan Inspector agreed the existing railway line forms a strong defensible boundary containing the urban area and represented the most appropriate long-term Green Belt boundary.

#### **4.68 Green Belt**

- 4.69 This site is located entirely in the designated Green Belt. Although it is relatively well contained, there is the possibility of coalescence with Alvechurch which is in close proximity to the south east. The Cross City

railway line from Birmingham to Redditch borders the north of the site and to the west is the Birmingham to Worcester railway line. There is also residential development to the west and Sandhills Green acts as a road boundary to the east. The M42 is also located nearby to the south, enclosing the site and reducing the risk of encroachment into the countryside.

#### **4.70 Flood Risk**

- 4.71 The site is entirely within flood zone 1 and is therefore considered to have the lowest risk of flooding, although a small stream exists to the east, which has not been modelled.

#### **4.72 Visual Appraisal**

- 4.73 This site can be viewed by the public footpath that runs to the west of the site. It is also visible by the M42 and railway in the south and north. There is limited view points from the road, however, the site can be seen from the car park at Barnt Green Social Club on Hewell Road. There are limited views from Sandhills Green in the east due to the distance the site is from the road and trees. The topography of the site is a clear hindrance to development. This particular site rises considerably from both the west to east and north to south. There is also a gradual slope from east to west, resulting in a high ridgeline in the middle of the site. Development here would be clearly seen by the adjoining railway and residential property, as well as from the public footpath in the east and M42 to the south.
- 4.74 The site is segregated into a number of small fields by fencing, and although the field furthest west is bounded by mature hedgerow. The embankment for the railway is also lined with trees, but there is little vegetation on the remainder of the site. The Green Belt function of the site is clear as this area forms a large expanse of countryside extending to the M42, which ultimately acts as the strategic gap between Barnt Green and

Alvechurch. The restrictive nature of the railway also makes this area appear to be somewhat separate from the rest of the settlement. Although there is some ribbon development along Hewell Road /Blackwell Road, housing on this site would not blend in with the rest of Barnt Green.

#### **4.75 Landscape Sensitivity**

- 4.76 The land in this area is all within medium sensitive landscape. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity would be resilient to some change.

#### **4.77 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 4.78 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a reasonable prospect (20.1 – 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **4.79 Historic Environment**

- 4.80 The site contains no Listed Buildings, is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and has no other statutory historic designations.
- 4.81 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, the fact that most of the District falls within the high and medium sensitivity areas means that development in these areas is inevitable. Historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

#### **4.82 Green Infrastructure**

- 4.83 To the west of the development site is a public footpath, which connects Barnt Green with the wider countryside and beyond via a footbridge over the M42. Alongside this footpath, in close proximity to the site is Cock's Croft Wood, which is a designated Special Wildlife Site. Green Infrastructure could be enhanced in this location as the wood is a small Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland also home to a small shallow pond. The footbridge and footpath also connects to Cooper's Hill Wood SWS on the opposite side of the motorway. Also adjacent to the footpath to the west of the development site are Hewell Road Allotments.
- 4.84 Although the boundary of the site consists of mature hedgerow and small number of trees, the site as a whole does not have any strong boundaries and is currently segregated by small scale fencing. The only water feature is a small stream to the east of the site that runs north to south.
- 4.85 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. However, this zone has high potential, meaning that the likelihood for the presence of additional/ high quality historic environment features in the zone is high. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.
- 4.86 According to Worcestershire's Landscape Character Assessment, this particular site is part of Copley Hill Principal Timbered Farmland. This type of land has been impacted upon from the motorway, which is evident at this site due to its close proximity to the M42. Also Ribbon development has taken place to the west of the site, which in turn has an impact on the Green Infrastructure potential of the area.

#### **4.87 Sustainability**

4.88 In terms of sustainability, the site entrance would be slightly less than 1km to the nearest shops and other facilities, including public transport nodes (however this is still beyond a reasonable walking distance). This distance is somewhat misleading as there are poor access links to these facilities. Sandhills Green to the east of the site is a very narrow road, with access problems exacerbated by a narrow tunnel underneath the railway. Access to the west of the site would be possible for pedestrians via the public right of way, but vehicular access would be unlikely due to existing residential development. Access to the north of the site is unfeasible due to the railway line.

#### **4.89 Summary**

4.90 This site is within the Green Belt and there is particular concern that development could potentially lead to coalescence with the neighbouring village of Alvechurch. There are also major concerns with the site in terms of access. Although beyond reasonable walking distance, the site is relatively near to Barnt Green's main centre, but access would be precarious for pedestrians due to narrow roads that could not provide pavements due to the tunnel under the railway. This particular location could also be hazardous for vehicles. For these reasons this site is not currently considered suitable for housing development.

#### **4.91 2013 Update**

4.92 This particular site formed part of a larger area (BDC104) that was promoted as part of the SHLAA process, and there was also a site directly next to this area (BDC6) promoted. Both sites were not considered suitable for development at this time due to their Green Belt designations. However, the SHLAA identifies that both of the sites should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.



## **Area 4: Land at Kendal End Road**

### **4.93 Site Description**

- 4.94 The site is located to the north of Barnt Green and is approximately 7 hectares in size. Around 5 hectares is currently used for silage purposes and the remainder of the land is a cricket pitch and woodland area. Roads provide the boundary to the site in north, east and westerly directions with residential development located to the south. The site is relatively flat and would enclose the Barnt Green Inn (Grade II listed) on three sides whilst the railway line runs parallel to the site.

### **4.95 Site Assessment**

### **4.96 Site History**

- 4.97 A large proportion of the site was promoted at the Local Plan Inquiry by Planning Consultants. The Inspector supported the objection site stating: *“I conclude that development of the objection site would have little effect on the purposes and the integrity of the Green Belt and, in particular would not contribute to the merging of Barnt Green and Kendal End. Given its high degree of sustainability and encouragement to the use of public transport, particularly rail, and its advantages over the BG5 site, I conclude that it would be appropriate to designate the land as an ADR, with the Green Belt boundary redrawn to follow the line of Cherry Hill Road.”*
- 4.98 Whilst the site was recommended for inclusion as an ADR within the Local Plan the Council disagreed with the Inspectors findings. At the time the Council had serious concerns over the effect development here would have on the Green Belt in particular, and to a lesser extent the impact of development on the adjacent Conservation Area, the question of density and the long-term threat to adjacent land parcels. On this basis the

Council decided to retain the site as Green Belt however, this was challenged in the High Court by the promoters of the site. This resulted in the site being removed from the Green Belt and as it has no policy designation it appears on the Local Plan Proposals Map as 'white land'.

#### **4.99 Green Belt**

4.100 Whilst the site was removed from the Green Belt it is important to consider the Green Belt function of the site and any implications on the wider Green Belt surrounding Barnt Green. As with any greenfield site there is an element of encroachment into the wider countryside. However, with the site bounded by Kendal End Road to the north and Cherry Hill Road to the west there are well defined defensible boundaries. In addition the Lickey Hills County Park is located to the North West where development would clearly not be permitted. The tightly bound nature of the site would not lead to any coalescence with Kendal End that is located to the north. The development of this site would potentially 'round off' the settlement.

#### **4.101 Flood Risk**

4.102 The site is located within flood zone 1 and therefore has the lowest chance of flooding. However, according to the Council's drainage engineer, Fiery Hill Road to the North West of the site is subject to repeated sewer flooding due to inadequate highway drains.

#### **4.103 Visual Appraisal**

4.104 This site has a number of different uses. There are two large fields that cover the majority of the site and are only used for the cutting of hay. In the most westerly section of the site is a cricket pitch that is used by Barnt Green Cricket Club. This area of land was identified as recreational space as part of the PPG17 study (March 2010). The most northerly part of the site consists of the Barnt Green Inn (a Grade II Listed Building) and its associated car park and grounds. The site is clearly visible from three of

its four sides. Current dwellings form the southern border would overlook the development as it is on higher land and there could be potential privacy issues. Development would be very visible from Fiery Hill Road and Kendal End Road, but would be more restricted from Cherry Hill Road due to tree cover. Access would also be able to be made by both Fiery Hill Road and Kendal End Road. A public footpath, known locally as Cherry Hill Walk, runs further south of the site but due to existing dwellings and trees the site cannot be seen from this location.

- 4.105 The cricket pitch is relatively flat with a very slight gradient south. The remainder of the site (the two fields) has a more noticeable gradient from east to west as the site lies at the bottom of the Lickey Hills. The southern and northwest border has mature hedgerow, as well as across the middle of the site dissecting the two fields. There are also a number of mature trees forming the boundary with the Barnt Green Inn, as well as four or five mature trees sporadically sprawled across the fields. There is a smaller, less developed hedge around the cricket pitch and adjacent to the site is Cherry Hill Woods.

#### **4.106 Landscape Sensitivity**

- 4.107 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

#### **4.108 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 4.109 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a reasonable prospect (20.1 – 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore

some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **4.110 Historic Environment**

4.111 The historic environment surrounding the site will provide a constraint to development. The Barnt Green Inn is a Grade II Listed Building and residential areas to the south forms part of a wider Conservation Area. Any development will therefore have to be designed sensitively so as not to harm the character and setting of the listed building or the adjacent Conservation Area.

4.112 The site falls within the Hopwood HECZ. The historic environment in this zone is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, the fact that most of the District falls within the high and medium sensitivity areas means that development in these areas is inevitable. Historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

#### **4.113 Green Infrastructure**

4.114 A number of mature hedgerows are located throughout the site providing a clear distinction between each of the fields. Important hedgerows and mature trees should be retained if development occurs. There is woodland (Cherry Hill Coppice) at the south west tip of the site which is subject of a woodland TPO. Adjacent to the north west of the site is the Lickey Hills Country Park, which provides an important link to the protected trees that are present on the site. There is a public footpath to the south of the site which extends to the Lickey Hills and becomes a bridle way.

4.115 The amenity value of the Hopwood HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the

historic environment point of view. The medium potential score of the zone means that the likelihood for the presence of additional/ high quality historic environment features is medium. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

- 4.116 According to Worcestershire's Landscape Character Assessment, this particular site is part of Blackwell Settled Farmlands which land use is dominated by large houses in extensive grounds that have been subject to infill housing. There are large expanses of tree cover around the site, which could potentially be linked to the development site.

#### **4.117 Sustainability**

- 4.118 The site has quite clear sustainability credentials and is within walking distance (less than 400m) of all the main services and facilities in the settlement including the school, doctor's surgery and shops. In addition the train station is located extremely close to the site and bus services are available on Kendal End Road.

#### **4.119 Summary**

- 4.120 The site is located close to the main facilities in the settlement and public transport is readily available close to the site. The site has been removed from the Green Belt and has well defined boundaries to prevent further sprawl into the surrounding countryside. Some of the site would not be developable, including the cricket pitch and Cherry Hill Coppice, both located to the south west of the site. Whilst the adjacent Conservation Area, listed building and nearby woodland subject to a TPO will require sensitive design and layout but would not necessarily prevent this sustainable site coming forward for development in the plan period. It can therefore be concluded that this site would be an appropriate location for housing growth.

#### **4.121 2013 Update**

- 4.122 An outline planning application (11/0741) for 88 dwellings was submitted and approved in relation to this site. The boundary related to the 5ha of pasture land and did not cover the woodland, cricket pitch or Listed Building. This application also included open space, realignment of Fiery Hill Road, a 38 space car park for the railway station, and vehicular access from Fiery Hill Road. An amended outline application (13/0121) was also approved with minor alterations.
- 4.123 Since the approval of the outline application, a reserved matters (13/0522) and full planning application (13/0343) have been submitted regarding the same area of land. Both of these applications have yet to be determined.

## **Area 5: Land at Blackwell Road**

### **4.124 Site Description**

4.125 This site is approximately 2.4 hectares in size and is located to the south of Barnt Green, and the land is primarily in pasture use for horse grazing, with some used as residential garden. The site is located to the east of Blackwell Road, which acts as a boundary, and is also bordered by dwellings to the north, the M42 to the south and woodland to the east.

### **4.126 Site Assessment**

### **4.127 Site History**

4.128 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **4.129 Green Belt**

4.130 This site is located entirely in the designated Green Belt; however, due to its small size and defensible boundaries, it is well contained. Blackwell Road and the railway line run parallel to the west of the site and the M42 acts as a boundary to the south. There is residential development and garden land to the north and Cock's Croft Wood (which is also a SWS) to the east. Although the settlement of Blackwell is relatively close to the southwest, the permanence of the motorway and railway line could prevent coalescence.

### **4.131 Flood Risk**

4.132 Although the site is entirely within flood zone 1 and is therefore considered to have the lowest risk of flooding, there has been historic flooding occurring further south of the area towards the motorway. The SFRA Level 1 indicates that floods occurred on the railway line and M42 Bridge on 12th February 2001.

#### **4.133 Visual Appraisal**

4.134 This site can be viewed along Blackwell Road, which forms the western boundary. It is even clearer from this location as there is a footpath along the embankment with the railway and road. The land in this location also rises both to the east and to the north, so development would be more visible on the higher parts of the land. The site is also extremely visible from the M42 motorway and development would be clearly seen as the motorway stands above the field. Although some evergreen trees have been planted along the boundary with the motorway, they will take fifteen to twenty years to mature; and would not entirely restrict views as the land rises north that would be above the tree line.

4.135 The fields are used for the grazing of horses and stables are situated in the southwest corner of the site. Fencing splits the area into three smaller fields and fencing is also along the boundary with Blackwell Road as well as hedgerow. This hedgerow is not mature in nature and has a number of gaps that allow the site to be viewed. The north boundary has a solid fence separating the residential area as well as trees; and east boundary consists of a number of mature trees and a small wooded area.

#### **4.136 Landscape Sensitivity**

4.137 The land in this area is all within medium sensitive landscape, which would be resilient to some change.

#### **4.138 Agricultural Land Quality**

4.139 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the District where there is some



prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **4.140 Historic Environment**

4.141 The site contains no Listed Buildings, is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and has no other statutory historic designations.

4.142 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, the fact that most of the District falls within the high and medium sensitivity areas means that development in these areas is inevitable. Historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

#### **4.143 Green Infrastructure**

4.144 Although the green infrastructure credentials within the site itself are somewhat limited, there are a number of green linkages around the site. There is a public footpath opposite the site on Blackwell Road, which extends into the countryside connecting to Linthurst Road to the west. Another public footpath can be found further to the east of the site that connects Barnt Green to the wider countryside.

4.145 In close proximity to the east of the site is Cock's Croft Wood, which is a designated Special Wildlife Site. Green Infrastructure could be enhanced in this location as the wood is a small Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland also home to a small shallow pond. The footbridge and footpath adjacent to this SWS also connects to Cooper's Hill Wood SWS on the opposite side of the motorway. Also adjacent to the north east of the development

site are Hewell Road Allotments. There are also further mature trees and ponds situated to the east, which are locally known as the Duck Pits.

- 4.146 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. However, this zone has high potential, meaning that the likelihood for the presence of additional/ high quality historic environment features in the zone is high. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.
- 4.147 According to Worcestershire's Landscape Character Assessment, this particular site is part of Cobley Hill Principal Timbered Farmland. This type of land has been impacted upon from the motorway, and this location is in close proximity to the M42. Also Ribbon development has taken place to the north of the site, which in turn has an impact on the Green Infrastructure potential of the area.

#### **4.148 Sustainability**

- 4.149 The site is beyond a reasonable walking distance with the majority of the main services and facilities approximately 1km away. The train station is a similar distance, but there are bus services within 400m.

#### **4.150 Summary**

- 4.151 Although this site is within the Green Belt, it could be argued that its Green Belt function is somewhat limited due to the contained nature of the site. There are strong boundaries around the location that would restrict sprawl into the countryside. The Green Infrastructure around the site could be utilised, however, development could also impinge on the ecological value of these areas. There is also evidence of historic flooding which would be of concern. The site has a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land, which is favourable compared to other

sites and should be preserved where possible. Although the site is not majorly unsustainable, there are potential sites around Barnt Green that are in closer proximity to local facilities. This combined with the high agricultural qualities of the land would mean this particular site is not considered suitable for housing development at this time.

**4.152 2013 Update**

4.153 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

## **Area 6: Land south of Fiery Hill Road**

### **4.154 Site Description**

4.155 The site is located to the south west of Barnt Green and covers an area of approximately 7.7 hectares. There is residential development to the north along Fiery Hill Road, the railway along the eastern boundary and open countryside to the south and west. The area is fairly high, rising from a south-westerly direction and is predominately pasture land.

### **4.156 Site Assessment**

### **4.157 Site History**

4.158 This site was consider as part of the Local Plan process as a potential ADR, but was ruled out. The Inspector said *"it is necessary to exercise extreme caution in relation to any proposals which could lead to further incremental, southern extension of the development boundary of Barnt Green"*. There was a concern development in this area could lead to encroachment of the open countryside and would contribute in a piecemeal way to the eventual coalescence of Barnt Green, Linthurst and Blackwell.

### **4.159 Green Belt**

4.160 The site is located entirely within the designated Green Belt. The development of the site would lead to significant encroachment into the wider Green Belt. Whilst the site is well contained to the north by residential development along Fiery Hill Road and the railway line to the east, development would set a precedent for development to the south.

### **4.161 Flood Risk**

4.162 Although the site is entirely within flood zone 1 and is therefore considered to have the lowest risk of flooding, there is a history of flooding occurring

further south of the area towards the motorway and the SFRA Level 1 indicates that floods occurred on the railway line and M42 Bridge on 12th February 2001.

#### **4.163 Visual Appraisal**

4.164 This particular area slopes from southwest to north, which would result in development being prominent when viewed from the south. The site is well bounded by both existing dwellings and their gardens to the north, as well as mature tree-lined hedgerows along the railway to the east. A hedgerow does form the western boundary; however, it is a low-lying hedge and doesn't contain any mature trees. The residential dwellings to the north restrict short distance views from Fiery Hill Road. The site is very visible from the public footpath to the southwest. Due to the sloping land, development would be clearly seen from this low-lying area.

4.165 The site can also be clearly viewed from the footpath along the embankment in-between the railway and the Blackwell Road. Although there are trees either side of the railway, the elevated nature of the path on the embankment allows the site to be viewed, especially on the highest northern points, and as a result development would be clearly seen. The area is in agricultural use and separated into two fields by a thin hedgerow. The Green Belt function of the site is extremely poignant as this location restricts further encroachment of the countryside and aids the gap that exists between Barnt Green and Blackwell.

#### **4.166 Landscape Sensitivity**

4.167 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

#### **4.168 Agricultural Land Quality**

4.169 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the District where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **4.170 Historic Environment**

4.171 The site contains no Listed Buildings or other statutory historic designations, but is adjacent to the Barnt Green Conservation Area.

4.172 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, the fact that most of the District falls within the high and medium sensitivity areas means that development in these areas is inevitable. Historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

#### **4.173 Green Infrastructure**

4.174 The site itself consists of two large fields of pasture land bordered with mature hedgerows. There is a public footpath further west of the site which links from Blackwell Road to two locations on Linthurst Road. There are no water features on the site and there are also no noticeable areas of woodland, although a number of residential properties to the north are home to mature trees.

4.175 The amenity value of the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. However, this zone has high potential, meaning that the likelihood for the presence of additional/ high quality historic environment features in the zone is high. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

4.176 According to Worcestershire's Landscape Character Assessment, this particular site is part of Blackwell Settled Farmlands which land use is dominated by large houses in extensive grounds that have been subject to infill housing. This particular area is particularly low in density and green infrastructure could be promoted as development respects this particular attribute of local character.

#### **4.177 Sustainability**

4.178 The site is relatively sustainable with the majority of the main services and facilities just over 800m. The train station and bus services are also within walking distance. However, access is somewhat restricted to the site due to the railway line to the east and should development take place, access would be needed via residential properties along Fiery Hill Road.

#### **4.179 Summary**

4.180 Land in this area has a vital Green Belt function in restricting encroachment of the urban area into open countryside and preventing the coalescence of Barnt Green with Linthurst and Blackwell. A large part of the site has a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site, which is favourable compared to other sites and should be preserved where possible. For these reasons, most notably the site's function within the Green Belt, it is not considered a suitable location for development during this time.

**4.181 2013 Update**

4.182 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.



## **Area 7: Land at Twatling Road**

### **4.183 Site Description**

4.184 This site is to the north west of Barnt Green adjacent to a low density residential area where a substantial amount of plot subdivision and infilling has taken place over the years. It comprises of 7.8 hectares of agricultural land, mainly used for horse grazing, in three fields on the east side of Twatling Road and north of Cherry Hill Road. The land is relatively flat and abuts Pinfields Wood to the east, which forms part of the Lickey Hills Country Park. There are dwellings flanking the site to the north in Pinfield Drive, on the opposite side of Twatling Road, at the junction of Twatling Road and Cherry Hill Road, and further to the east along Cherry Hill Road.

### **4.185 Site Assessment**

### **4.186 Site History**

4.187 The site was promoted by Bromsgrove District Council as a potential ADR as part of the Local Plan process. The Inspector, however, believed the alternative site at Kendal End Road (Area 4) was a more preferable location. The Inspector concluded that although there was not much difference in terms of Green Belt function, the Kendal End Road site is in a more sustainable location. Moreover, it is capable of development to a higher density without compromising the character of its surroundings and allows the possibility of some mixed uses.

4.188 The Local Plan Inspector was concerned on the effect development at this site would have in terms of landscape and nature conservation interests. The open farm land is very visible from footpaths running close to the margins of Pinfields Wood, especially in the winter, and to a greater extent from public viewpoints along Twatling Road and Cherry Hill Road. The Inspector stated:

*“In my judgement the land makes an important contribution to the overall character of the area and, most importantly, protects the setting of the Lickey Hills Country Park. Photographic evidence presented to the inquiry, confirmed and reinforced by my own observations, reveals that development approved by the Council further along Twatling Road has had an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the adjoining woodland. Not only did I see substantial and prominent buildings constructed very close to the woodland edge but there were also a variety of unsympathetic boundary treatments and instances of damage to trees. While development control issues such as these would not normally effect decisions about generic use of land, I have little confidence that the situation would not be repeated. Such concerns have to be weighed in the balance with other material considerations”.*

- 4.189 Another concern the Inspector had regarding the site is that densities in this part of Barnt Green are very low (2.5-10 dwellings per hectare), creating a unique semi-rural character that is enhanced by mature woodland and open fields. This could potentially lead to development that is not in keeping with the surrounding area or land use that is not fully utilised.

#### **4.190 Green Belt**

- 4.191 The site is located entirely within the designated Green Belt. It is surrounded on three sides by established residential development and/or roads. On the remaining side potential development would come up against the barrier of the Country Park, approximately 200m deep at this point. There would therefore be little likelihood of further encroachment into the Green Belt leading to urban sprawl, a view share by the Local Plan Inspector. Development on this site would not lead to merging of

Barnt Green with any other settlements due to the restrictive nature of the boundaries.

#### **4.192 Flood Risk**

4.193 Although the site is entirely within flood zone 1 and is therefore considered to have the lowest risk of flooding, there has been historic flooding occurring adjacent to the site. According to the Council's drainage engineer this particular location near Plymouth Road is prone to repeated flooding as there are two sets of attenuation tanks within the highways. Stream infiltration is a consistent problem here and various small ditches cause instant flooding during flash storms.

#### **4.194 Visual Appraisal**

4.195 This site is flat across its entirety and can be viewed from Twatling Road that's forms the west boundary and from a small section of Cherry Hill Road to the south. These are short term views; long term views are restricted by the existing residential area and woodland. Pinfield Woods forms the eastern boundary; residential dwellings and their gardens form the northern boundary and some of the southern boundary. Although hedgerow and mature trees form part of the boundaries with Twatling Road and Cherry Hill Road, development would still be seen through various gaps and where gates are located. The fields furthest west are used for horses, the east is unused scrubland and the centre of the site is used for general agriculture.

#### **4.196 Landscape Sensitivity**

4.197 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change. The site is however, located in close proximity to high landscape sensitivity and would have to pay regard to this if development was to occur.

#### **4.198 Agricultural Land Quality**

4.199 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a reasonable prospect (20.1 – 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **4.200 Historic Environment**

4.201 The land is not within the Barnt Green Conservation area but is located in close proximity to it. Any development will therefore have to be designed sensitively not to harm the character and setting. There are no Listed Buildings or other statutory historic designations near to the site.

4.202 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, the fact that most of the District falls within the high and medium sensitivity areas means that development in these areas is inevitable. Historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly. The site is however directly adjacent the Romsley HECZ, which has a very high sensitivity value.

#### **4.203 Green Infrastructure**

4.204 The land on this site gradually slopes from south to north. Although there are no public rights of way directly on the site, there is a bridleway further east of the site and a public footpath north of the site. There land is a combination of three fields with a line of mature trees and hedgerow

forming the west boundary of the site and also separating the top two fields. Pinfields Wood is located directly to the east, which is semi-natural woodland that is designated as a SWS and forms part of the Lickey Hills Country Park. There are no water features on this site.

4.205 The amenity value of the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. However, this zone has high potential, meaning that the likelihood for the presence of additional/ high quality historic environment features in the zone is high. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

4.206 According to Worcestershire's Landscape Character Assessment, this particular site is part of Woodbury Wooded Hills, which is notorious for large houses with large garden plots that have been subjected to infill housing. This is particularly relevant for this part of Barnt Green. The nearby woods contribute to the fragmented woodland this landscape character is notorious for and would be a value addition to green infrastructure related to the site.

#### **4.207 Sustainability**

4.208 In terms of sustainability, the site is within five minute car and fifteen minute cycling/walking isochrones of Barnt Green Railway Station. The closest part lies approximately 600m from the main centre and the furthest part some 1300m. However, there is a steep uphill gradient encountered by those returning on foot from the village centre, particularly if the most direct route is taken along the un-surfaced and unlit footpath linking Fiery Hill Road with Cherry Hill Road. Moreover, there are neither footways nor street lights in Cherry Hill Road. The Local plan Inspector believed these

factors would discourage residents from walking and lead them to make greater use of the private car.

#### **4.209 Summary**

4.210 Although the site is within the Green Belt, its is unlikely that encroachment will occur as Pinfields Wood acts as a strong defensible boundary, and merging of settlements is unlikely due to the restrictive nature of residential development bordering the site. This location is fairly sustainable, although the railway station and main facilities are within walking distance, the steep gradient for the return journey from the village centre would potentially discourage walking. This particular area of Barnt Green consists of very low density housing and is adjacent the Conservation Area. Although all these reasons would not prevent development, it is the opinion of the Council that there are more suitable and sustainable sites within Barnt Green that could provide development for the initial housing targets.

#### **4.211 2013 Update**

4.212 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

## **Area 8: Land at Shepley Road/Billy Lane**

### **4.213 Site Description**

4.214 The site is approximately 4.3 hectares in size and is located at the south western end of Barnt Green. The greenfield site that is currently in pasture use and is low lying with a slope across the site falling to the south west corner. The site is bounded by Shepley Road to the north and Billy Lane to the south and east. Very low density residential development surrounds the site. A central area of the site is covered by mature trees.

### **4.215 Site Assessment**

### **4.216 Site History**

4.217 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **4.218 Green Belt**

4.219 The site is within the designated Green Belt and therefore it is necessary to consider the Green Belt function of the site. The development of the site would consolidate built form further south reducing the gap between the settlements of Barnt Green and Blackwell. The development of the site would also lead to a level of encroachment into the wider rural landscapes. Although the site is bounded on all sides by roads or mature trees, the location of the site is somewhat detached from the surrounding urban area and development would create urban sprawl. There are currently no very special circumstances that could justify warranting the removal of this site from the Green Belt.

### **4.220 Flood Risk**

4.221 The site falls within flood zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding.

#### **4.222 Visual Appraisal**

4.223 This site has short-term views from all of Shepley Road that forms the northern boundary. Although there is some hedgerow and trees along this boundary, they are sporadic and there are many gaps offering a view of the site. The land also slopes from here downhill to the south, and therefore, Shepley Road is in a somewhat elevated position and any development to the north would be clearly visible from the road. Although Shepley Road continues to form the western boundary and Billy Lane the eastern boundary, views cannot be seen due to the dense trees that form a border with the site. There are residential gardens forming the southern boundary, which also has large amounts of woodland. The site consists of one large field that is used for agricultural purposes, mainly hay cutting. There is a small collection of trees grouped together halfway down the site slightly to the west.

#### **4.224 Landscape Sensitivity**

4.225 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

#### **4.226 Agricultural Land Quality**

4.227 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a reasonable prospect (20.1 – 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.



#### **4.228 Historic Environment**

4.229 The site is located within the Barnt Green Conservation Area that is characterised by very low density development. Whilst the Conservation Area designation does not self-preclude development any housing would probably need to be of a low density to retain the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Development of this site could therefore be considered to be a very inefficient use of greenfield land.

4.230 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, the fact that most of the District falls within the high and medium sensitivity areas means that development in these areas is inevitable. Historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

#### **4.231 Green Infrastructure**

4.232 The site is bordered by a number of trees and established hedgerows. A small part of the site towards the south is covered by mature trees. Although none of the trees have TPOs, they are within the Conservation Area and as a result are protected from development. There are no public rights of way or waterways on or around the site that can be incorporated into the green infrastructure of potential development. There is however SWS located to the south of the site in the form of Linthurst Wood, which is broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland.

4.233 The amenity value of the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. However, this zone has high potential, meaning that the likelihood for the presence of additional/ high quality historic environment

features in the zone is high. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

4.234 According to Worcestershire's Landscape Character Assessment, this particular site is part of Blackwell Settled Farmlands which land use is dominated by large houses in extensive grounds that have been subject to infill housing. This particular area is particularly low in density and Green infrastructure could be promoted as development respects this particular attribute of local character.

#### **4.235 Sustainability**

4.236 In terms of sustainability the site does not perform particularly well. The proposed site is over 1km from the local centre where the majority of local services are and the nearest school is even further away. However, a bus stop is located close to the site.

#### **4.237 Summary**

4.238 In conclusion the site is not particularly well located in relation to the majority of local facilities and development potential of the site is constrained by conservation issues in regards to the character of the locality. In addition the site has an important Green Belt function in preventing coalescence between Blackwell and Barnt Green, as well as preventing countryside encroachment and urban sprawl. It is not considered that the site is suitable to contribute to Council's housing target at this time.

#### **4.239 2013 Update**

This site (BDC182) has been promoted as part of the SHLAA process and is not considered suitable for development at this time due to their Green Belt designations. However, the SHLAA states that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

#### **4.240 Overall Conclusions for Barnt Green**

4.241 In total eight sites have been considered around Barnt Green and have been through the sustainability process and therefore assessed against the sustainability objectives. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) identified that areas 1 and 2 performed best due to close proximity to existing facilities and services at Barnt Green centre and the opportunities to travel by sustainable modes in the form of buses and trains. However, there are currently fundamental issues that prevent the sites from being suitable for development at the current time. Area 1 would lead to the loss of sports and recreation facilities which would have a major harmful impact on the residents of Barnt Green. Area 2 has fundamental Green Belt purposes with the site having no defensible Green Belt boundaries increasing the risk of coalescence with Alvechurch. The next best performing site was the Land at Kendal End Road (area 4) and is considered the most suitable and appropriate to contribute to the initial housing target. Area 4 has strong Green Belt boundaries on all four sides limiting encroachment and the tightly bound nature of the site would reduce the likelihood of any coalescence with Kendal End that is located to the north.

#### **4.242 2013 Update**

4.243 Area 4 was included as a potential development site within the DCS2 which went out to consultation between January and April 2011. There were a total of 164 Core Strategy responses in relation to Barnt Green and a petition of 487 signatures. The main overall concerns were in relation to the 'whitelands', its designation as a future development site and the impact on existing infrastructure. Other concerns included the fear of an increase in crime and anti-social behaviour; adverse impact on adjacent listed building and character of Barnt Green; adverse impact on highway network; loss of biodiversity and lack of need for development and/or

affordable housing. A response was also received by site promoter who supports the allocation of land at Area 4. They highlight that the site is suitable for residential development and is in a sustainable location.

4.244 Each individual comment was carefully considered by the Council and detailed responses to these comments have been published on the Council website. It was considered that many of the concerns raised in relation to the site could be addressed either through minor wording changes to policies or through infrastructure contributions. On balance it was felt that none of the issues raised were so fundamental that the site should not continue to be proposed through the plan making process.

4.245 Following the major changes in national and regional planning which included the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework and the revocation of the RSS on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2013 this site assessment study was reconsidered. Whilst these national changes are fundamental they ultimately do not significantly alter the findings of this study. The NPPF focusses on delivering growth in sustainable manner. The testing of options through this method will help to ensure that the most sustainable outcome is achieved.

4.246 As mentioned previously, an outline planning application (11/0741) for 88 dwellings was submitted and approved in relation to Area 4. The boundary related to the 5ha of pasture land and did not cover the woodland, cricket pitch or Listed Building. This application also included open space, realignment of Fiery Hill Road, a 38 space car park, and vehicular access from Fiery Hill Road. An amended outline application (13/0121) was also approved with minor alterations.

4.247 Since the approval of the outline application, a reserved matters (13/0522) and full planning application (13/0343) have been submitted regarding the

same area of land. Both of these applications have yet to be determined. A number of detailed studies were submitted with these applications and these include a transport assessments, habitat surveys, noise assessments, heritage surveys and tree reports.

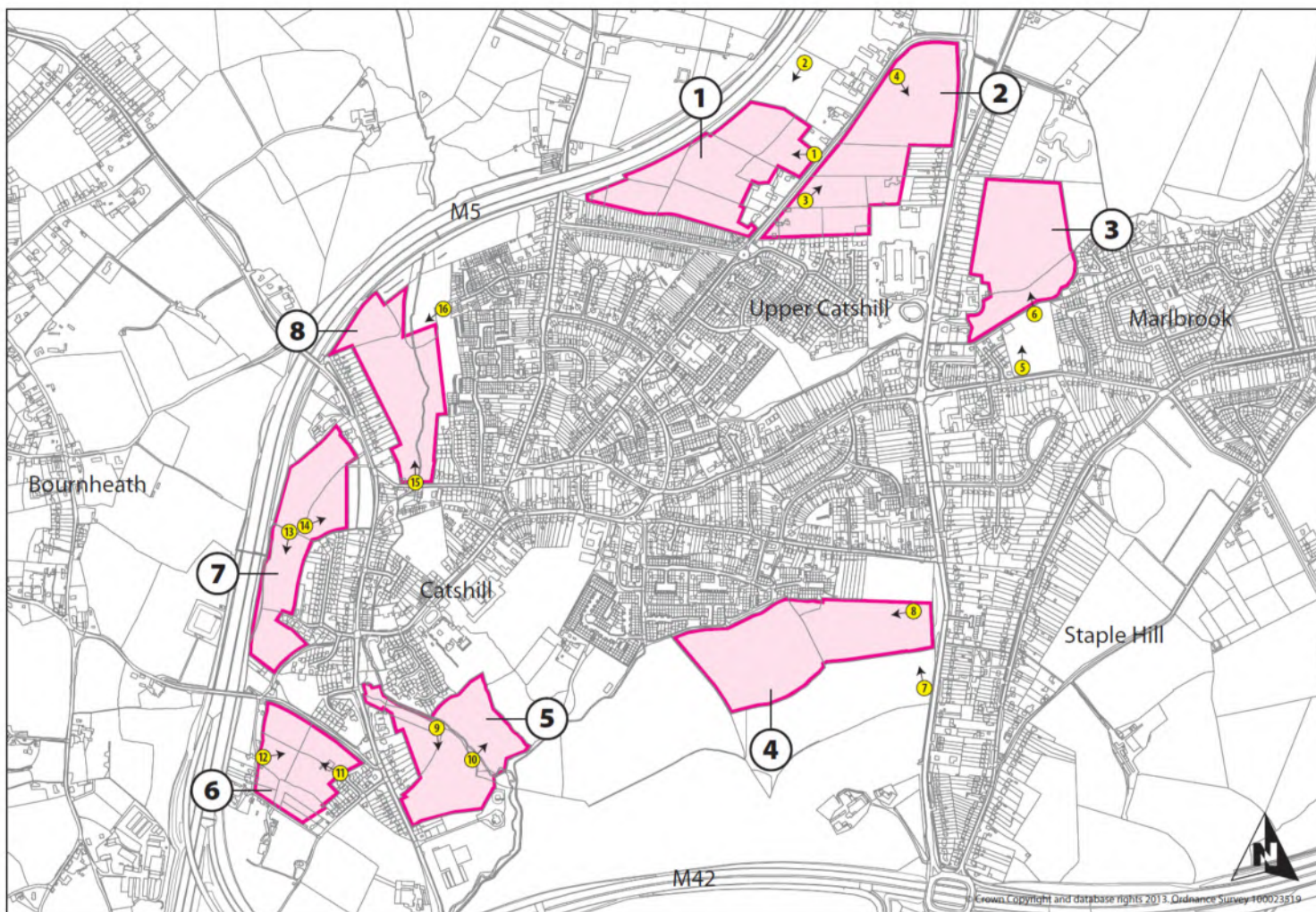
4.248 In light of the above the proposed allocation of land at Kendal End Road will be included within the Publication version of the Bromsgrove District Plan.

## **5. Catshill Assessment**

### **5.1 Introduction**

5.2 Catshill is located approximately 2.5 miles north of Bromsgrove and 10 miles south-west of Birmingham. The settlement has a small shopping area along Golden Cross Lane, a village hall, a library, dentist, doctor's surgery, as well as a first and middle school. The M42 and M5 motorways are also within close proximity.

5.3 A total of eight possible development sites have been identified in and around the periphery of Catshill. Each of these sites will be assessed to determine their suitability to contribute to the delivery of 4,000 homes across the District. All sites have been visited as part of the appraisal process and a selection of photos from each site are attached at Appendix 3. All photos were taken from publicly accessible positions and the approximate locations where the photos were taken are shown on map 3 below.



Map 3: Catshill Areas with photo viewpoints

## **Area 1: Land to the west of Woodrow Lane**

### **5.4 Site Description**

- 5.5 This site is approximately 7 hectares and situated to the west of Woodrow Lane. The M5 motorway acts as a boundary to the west, dwellings along Cobnall Road lie to the south, low density housing along Woodrow Lane lies to the east and open countryside to the north. The land is segregated in to a number of small fields that are all used for agricultural purposes.

### **5.6 Site Assessment**

### **5.7 Site History**

- 5.8 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **5.9 Green Belt**

- 5.10 The site is located entirely in the designated Green Belt and has two important functions. It assists in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and serves to check the unrestricted sprawl of the built-up area. The settlement of Catshill is relatively well contained by its landform such that it cannot readily be seen when approaching from the north, a situation that would be compromised by the development of this site.

### **5.11 Flood Risk**

- 5.12 The site is entirely within flood zone 1 and is therefore considered to have the lowest risk of flooding; however the SFRA Level 1 report identified there has been accounts of historic flooding. According to the Council's drainage engineer, Cobnall Road is subject to repeated flooding as the piped watercourse cannot cope. This location also experiences flooding due to the stream from Lydiate Ash altered on line and by culverting



during construction of motorway. The main reason is from lack of maintenance and heavy flows causing properties to be flooded.

### **5.13 Visual Appraisal**

- 5.14 Although there is low density housing bordering the majority of the east of the site along Woodrow Lane, there are a number of openings where field boundaries exist that allow views into the site. The land is relatively flat across the whole site, with a number of small fields separated by mature hedgerows as well as woodland to the south west of the site. The south of the site is bordered by existing dwellings, which hides views of the site. The west of the site contains a tree lined border from the M5; however, due to the flat nature of the land the site is extremely visible from the motorway, as is the motorway from the site. There is a public footpath to the north of the site, as the land is flat views would not be unduly prominent. The Green Belt function of the site is clearly evident from the site as to the north is a large expanse of open countryside.

### **5.15 Landscape Sensitivity**

- 5.16 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

### **5.17 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 5.18 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **5.19 Historic Environment**

- 5.20 The site contains no Listed Buildings, is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and has no other statutory historic designations.
- 5.21 The site falls within the Catshill and Lickey End HECZ, as does the whole settlement of Catshill and Marlbrook. The historic environment in this zone is of low sensitivity and would be resilient to change. This classification would cause the least harm to historic environment assets if development occurred, in a District that has many high and medium sensitivity areas.

### **5.22 Green Infrastructure**

- 5.23 This area of land consists of eight small fields, most of which are separated by mature hedgerows. A triangular parcel of dense woodland is situated to the west of the site. The west boundary also consists of a number of mature trees, which act as a screen to the M5 motorway. There is no public rights of way on the actual site, but there is a footpath due north which crosses over the motorway and leads to the further countryside.
- 5.24 The amenity value of the Catshill and Lickey End HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness with the lowest rating of 1. The historic environment does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining sense of place. However, the full potential may be unknown and there is, therefore scope for further investigations. These should be carried out as part of masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design to identify constraints and opportunities.

### **5.25 Sustainability**

- 5.26 In terms of sustainability, the site lies beyond the five minute drive isochrone of the closest railway station at Barnt Green. It does not therefore fall within a rail-based transport corridor, but this is the case for the whole of Catshill. While regular and frequent bus services are available along the A38 and elsewhere, this particular location would not provide adequate proximity to these routes. Catshill local centre, where the majority of shops are located is approximately 800m away from the site. The site is also in close proximity of the M5 motorway, which would create a reliance on private car and discourage a modal shift to public transport. Catshill's GP surgery is less than 400m from the site, but the settlements schools are over 800m.

### **5.27 Summary**

- 5.28 In conclusion this site would not be appropriate for contributing towards the initial housing target. The Green Belt credentials of the site are paramount in this location and would lead to Catshill encroaching on the open countryside to the north. The land appears to have a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site, which is the best possible designation. Although within walking distance of the local centre, the site on a whole is fairly unsustainable and in close proximity to the M5 motorway, encouraging the use of car.

### **5.29 2013 Update**

- 5.30 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

## **Area 2: Land to the east of Woodrow Lane**

### **5.31 Site Description**

- 5.32 The site is situated to the north of Catshill and is approximately 7 hectares in size. It comprises of land currently used for both grazing and arable farming. The land falls to the south-west from a gentle ridge. The site is contained by Woodrow Lane to the west, by the rear boundaries of houses fronting Birmingham Road and the Hilton Hotel to the south-east, and by residential development to the south.

### **5.33 Site Assessment**

### **5.34 Site History**

- 5.35 This particular site was promoted during the Local Plan Process as land that should be excluded from the Green Belt in order to meet the District's future housing needs. The Inspector concluded that there was already sufficient land identified as ADR land and therefore discounted this site.

### **5.36 Green Belt**

- 5.37 The site has two important Green Belt functions. It assists in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and serves to check the unrestricted sprawl of the built-up area. The BDLP Inspector shared this view and felt these Green Belt purposes would be compromised by the designation of the site as an ADR. The settlement of Catshill is relatively well contained by its landform such that it cannot readily be seen when approaching from the north, a situation that would be compromised by the development of this site.

### **5.38 Flood Risk**

- 5.39 The site is located within flood zone 1, therefore has the lowest chance of flooding and there were no accounts of historic flooding identified as part of the SFRA Level 1.

### **5.40 Visual Appraisal**

- 5.41 This area is clearly separated into two sections due to a ridge across the middle of the site from west to east. There is one large field to the north, which gradually slopes south upwards to the ridge, meaning potential development would be extremely prominent as one enters Catshill from Woodrow Lane. The southern section of the site contains numerous fields that slope gradually from the south west up to the ridge line. Although development in this part of the site would be prominent from the south, the ridge line would keep it somewhat contained. Only mature hedgerows separating the field boundaries would have any biodiversity value, but the intensive agricultural use is evident throughout the various fields. The Green Belt function of the site is clearly evident from the site as to the north beyond the existing road network is a large expanse of open countryside.

### **5.42 Landscape Sensitivity**

- 5.43 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

### **5.44 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 5.45 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some

prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **5.46 Historic Environment**

5.47 The site contains no Listed Buildings, is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and has no other statutory historic designations.

5.48 The site falls within the Catshill and Lickey End HECZ, as does the whole settlement of Catshill and Marlbrook. The historic environment in this zone is of low sensitivity and would be resilient to change. This classification would cause the least harm to historic environment assets if development occurred, in a District that has many high and medium sensitivity areas.

#### **5.49 Green Infrastructure**

5.50 This area consists of a number of fields that are in agricultural use and bordered by mature hedgerows. There is a public footpath adjacent to the site which extends west, and has a footbridge over the M5 leading onto further open countryside. There is also a footpath to the north of the site and the national Sustrans Route 5 runs along the boundary to the west. There is a gentle gradient uphill from the south-west to the middle of the site, before sloping back down further north.

5.51 The amenity value of the Catshill and Lickey End HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness with the lowest rating of 1. The historic environment does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining sense of place. However, the full potential may be unknown and there is, therefore scope for further investigations. These should be carried out as part of masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design to identify constraints and opportunities.

## **5.52 Sustainability**

5.53 In terms of sustainability, the site lies beyond the five minute drive isochrones of the closest railway station at Barnt Green. It does not therefore fall within a rail-based transport corridor, but this is the case for the whole of Catshill. While regular and frequent bus services are available along the A38 and elsewhere, this particular location would not provide adequate proximity to these routes. Catshill local centre, where the majority of shops are located is approximately 800m away from the site, although there is a shop and limited services at another location less than 400m away. The site is also in close proximity of the M5 motorway, which would create a reliance on private car and discourage a modal shift to public transport. Catshill's GP surgery is less than 400m from the site, but the settlements schools are over 800m.

## **5.54 Summary**

5.55 In conclusion this site would not be appropriate for contributing to the initial housing target. The Green Belt credentials of the site are paramount in this location and would lead to Catshill encroaching into the open countryside to the north. The land appears to have a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site, which is the highest in the District. Although the site is relatively sustainable in terms of local facilities, the close proximity to the M5 motorway could encourage the use of car.

## **5.56 2013 Update**

5.57 The field furthest north of this area (BDC128) and two small fields to the south west (BDC64 and BDC208) were promoted through the SHLAA process. The sites were not considered suitable for development due to their strategic location in relation to Catshill and their Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that sites adjacent to the

existing urban area should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.



### **Area 3: Land to the east of Birmingham Road**

#### **5.58 Site Description**

5.59 This area of land is situated to the east of Catshill within the settlement of Marlbrook. This site consists of two fields in agricultural use and is approximately 5.8 hectares in size. Residential dwellings along Birmingham Road border the site to the west, Braces Lane Recreation Ground to the south, and residential dwellings along Redland Close to the south-east. A single dwelling and associated land is positioned north of the site and open countryside exists to the north-east.

#### **5.60 Site Assessment**

#### **5.61 Site History**

5.62 This particular site was promoted during the Local Plan Process by developers as a potential ADR site. The Inspectors Report in 2002 stated the site *“fulfils Green Belt functions of checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas and preventing encroachment into the countryside”*.

#### **5.63 Green Belt**

5.64 The land lies outside the settlement boundary of Marlbrook and is within designated Green Belt. The land slopes from south to north and development on the elevated northern ridgeline would unacceptably intrude into the countryside, as well as result in a loss of containment to Lower Marlbrook when viewed from the north. There are no defensible boundaries to the north to prevent encroachment into the countryside and development would reduce the strategic gap between Catshill and the West Midlands conurbation.

### **5.65 Flood Risk**

- 5.66 The site falls within flood zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding although there is an ordinary watercourse to the south of the site running from east to west that has not been modelled. The SFRA Level 1 did account for a number of historic flooding incidences along this watercourse in close proximity to the site. In July 2007 there was road flooding and flood defences erected to the south-west of the site. The Council drainage engineer also identified repeated flooding to the south-east of the site due to the catchment of the watercourse being in-filled and the brook not coping with storm run-off.

### **5.67 Visual Appraisal**

- 5.68 The topography of the site is a clear hindrance to development, which would be extremely visible from Braces Lane. The land slopes from south to north and development on the elevated northern ridgeline would unacceptably intrude into the countryside, as well as result in a loss of containment to Lower Marlbrook when viewed from the north. A public footpath runs further east of the site, and from here the site is extremely visible. Existing dwellings along the west of the site are in an elevated position and there would be potential privacy issues if development were to take place. Braces Lane Playing field is an extremely flat piece of land adjacent to the site, however, development would enclose this location and lose the 'open' characteristics. The main large field to the north is intensively used for agriculture and is bordered by mature hedgerow. A stream runs along the southern edge of the site which would further restrict development.

### **5.69 Landscape Sensitivity**

- 5.70 The landscape in this area is of low sensitivity, which is the most preferable for development.

### **5.71 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 5.72 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be no prospect of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. The fact that no high quality land would be lost weighs in favour of the development of this particular site.

### **5.73 Historic Environment**

- 5.74 The site contains no Listed Buildings, is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and has no other statutory historic designations.
- 5.75 The site falls within the Catshill and Lickey End HECZ, as does the whole settlement of Catshill and Marlbrook. The historic environment in this zone is of low sensitivity and would be resilient to change. This classification would cause the least harm to historic environment assets if development occurred, in a District that has many high and medium sensitivity areas.

### **5.76 Green Infrastructure**

- 5.77 The area consists of two fields that are in agricultural use and bordered by mature hedgerows. There is a stream running along the southern edge of the site, with a public footpath running parallel to the stream from east to west. There is also a public footpath further east of the site leading to further countryside to the north.
- 5.78 Braces Lane Recreation Ground directly to the south has been identified as part of the PPG17 study (March 2010) as sports/recreational land which should be preserved. This area is home to a football pitch, basketball court and a play area.

5.79 The amenity value of the Catshill and Lickey End HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness with the lowest rating of 1. The historic environment does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining sense of place. However, the full potential may be unknown and there is, therefore scope for further investigations. These should be carried out as part of masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design to identify constraints and opportunities.

## **5.80 Sustainability**

5.81 In regards to sustainability, the site is not as well located to services as other potential development areas around Catshill. Apart from the recreation ground, there is a relatively narrow range of facilities available in easy walking distance. The main local centre of Catshill and also the nearest GP surgery are over 1km away. The site lies beyond five minutes drive of both the railway station at Barnt Green and Bromsgrove. It does not therefore fall within a rail-based transport corridor, but this is the case for the whole of Catshill. There are, however, regular bus services along the A38 near the south-west of the site to Bromsgrove Town and Birmingham. The BDLP Inspector had concerns over the ease of access to the motorway from this site, stating it would *“encourage use of the private car and discourage a modal shift to public transport”*.

## **5.82 Summary**

5.83 Overall, this site would not be appropriate to contribute towards the initial housing target due to both Green Belt and sustainability reasons. The area of land restricts encroachment into the open countryside and development here could reduce the gap between Catshill and the West Midlands conurbation. There are also a number of sites in and around Catshill that are nearer to essential services and facilities.

#### **5.84 2013 Update**

- 5.85 This whole area was promoted through the SHLAA process in two separate site submissions (BDC61 and BDC210). Both sites were not considered suitable for development due to their Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

#### **Area 4: Land to the west of Birmingham Road**

##### **5.86 Site Description**

- 5.87 This area of land is situated south of Catshill. The site consists of two large fields in agricultural use extending to approximately 8.7 hectares. The A38 Birmingham Road bounds the east, a residential estate off Barley Mow Lane to the north and open countryside to the south and west. The land rises from the south-west of the site to a high point of 152m near the cemetery.

##### **5.88 Site Assessment**

##### **5.89 Site History**

- 5.90 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

##### **5.91 Green Belt**

- 5.92 The site is within the designated Green Belt and therefore it is necessary to consider the Green Belt function of the site. The development of the site would consolidate built form further south reducing the gap between the settlements of Catshill and Lickey End, which is approximately 400m away. The development of the site would also lead to a level of encroachment into the wider rural landscapes.

##### **5.93 Flood Risk**

- 5.94 There are no watercourses on or adjacent to the site and the entire area falls within flood zone 1 and is therefore considered to have the lowest risk of flooding.

### **5.95 Visual Appraisal**

- 5.96 This particular site is arguably the most visible when compared to the other seven. Although there are residential dwellings across the north and the cemetery, the remainder of the site is noticeable from a number of areas. This is exacerbated by the steep gradient of the land in both fields. The west field slopes from south-west to the north and the east field slopes from south to north. This would make future development exceptionally prominent from the A38 to the east and also the public footpath to the south of the site. There is mature hedgerow bordering the site and dissecting the two fields. There is a small area of woodland located to the north east of the east field. The Green Belt function of the site is clear as this area forms a large expanse of countryside extending to the M5, which ultimately acts as the strategic gap between Catshill and Bromsgrove. Due to the high gradient of the land this particular site would be visible from the motorway (over 500m away) and from over 1km to the south-west due to the open countryside around this location.

### **5.97 Landscape Sensitivity**

- 5.98 The landscape in this area is of low sensitivity, which is preferable for development.

### **5.99 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 5.100 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **5.101 Historic Environment**

- 5.102 The site contains no Listed Buildings, is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and has no other statutory historic designations.
- 5.103 The site falls within the Catshill and Lickey End HECZ, as does the whole settlement of Catshill and Marlbrook. The historic environment in this zone is of low sensitivity and would be resilient to change. This classification would cause the least harm to historic environment assets if development occurred, in a District that has many high and medium sensitivity areas.

### **5.104 Green Infrastructure**

- 5.105 This site is separated into two large fields, with a small area of land to the north designated as open space, which is detached from the fields by a number of large trees. The boundary to the fields, as well as the majority of the northern border is bound by mature hedgerow and sporadically by trees. There is a public footpath along the west boundary of the site which connects Catshill to the north to the wider countryside towards the south.
- 5.106 Adjacent to the site, to the north-east is North Bromsgrove Cemetery. This area was identified as part of the PPG17 study and could not be developed upon. A small section of land to the north of the site is designated as a play area and/or open space as part of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan. There are also a number of trees within the northern boundary that are subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), although they are unlikely to restrict development.
- 5.107 The amenity value of the Catshill and Lickey End HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness with the lowest rating of 1. The historic environment does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining sense of place. However, the full potential may



be unknown and there is, therefore scope for further investigations. These should be carried out as part of masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design to identify constraints and opportunities.

#### **5.108 Sustainability**

5.109 As this site is large in scale, some parts appear to be more sustainable than others. The west of the site is approximately 400m away from Catshill's local centre, whereas the furthest part of the site is over 1km away from the local centre, but is in walking distance to a small number of facilities in Marlbrook. However, the more sustainable west of the site has access issues due to existing residential development. As this site is located to the south east of Catshill, it is the nearest point of the settlement to Bromsgrove Railway Station, but is still a considerable distance away being more than five minutes drive away. However regular and frequent bus services are available along the A38.

#### **5.110 Air Quality**

5.111 Development so close to the Lickey End AQMA could have adverse impacts on air quality. However, detailed assessments would be required to determine the full extent of this issue.

#### **5.112 Summary**

5.113 Although parts of this site are sustainable, others are not and the Green Belt function of the site outweighs its sustainability credentials. Development in this location would heavily impinge on the open countryside and would reduce the strategic gap between Catshill and settlements of Lickey End and Bromsgrove Town. Due to the topography of the site, the gradient from south-west to north would result in development being extremely visible from the Bromsgrove area. The land appears to have a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site, which is the highest in

the District. In conclusion the site is not currently suitable to contribute towards the initial housing target.

**5.114 2013 Update**

5.115 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

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## **Area 5: Land to the East of Stourbridge Road**

### **5.116 Site Description**

5.117 This site lies to the south-west of Catshill and extends to approximately 5.9 hectares. Stourbridge Road and residential dwellings are located to the west, school playing fields and fields further to the east, residential to the north and a garden centre to the south. The Battlefield Brook runs through the middle of the site from north to south, and the predominant land use is grazing although one field is in residential use.

### **5.118 Site Assessment**

### **5.119 Site History**

5.120 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **5.121 Green Belt**

5.122 This site is split into four fields and an area of woodland, all of which are within designated Green Belt. Development in this location would extend the urban form of Catshill further south into the open countryside. This would also significantly reduce the strategic gap that exists between the settlement and Bromsgrove Town. The boundaries of the site itself do not have potential to be suitable Green Belt boundaries; however, the watercourse running through the centre of the site could restrict some development to the east.

### **5.123 Flood Risk**

5.124 The Battlefield Brook runs through the site and a large proportion of land was identified in the SFRA Level 1 as Flood Zone 3, which means that there is a high possibility of flooding. The Council drainage engineer also

notes that further south of the site, repeated flooding occurs due to run off from Hinton Fields along with old weirs located along the brook.

### **5.125 Visual Appraisal**

5.126 A public footpath runs through the site so views would be apparent from a number of locations. The views from the Stourbridge road that runs to the west of the site are somewhat limited by existing dwellings. The public footpath begins at the north-west of the site, along with a gravelled drive. Here, the land rises steeply to the open space, where the first field appears to be in residential use and the remaining land is used for the grazing of horses.

5.127 There is a steep ridge running along the Battlefield Brook, which dissects the site, with relatively flat land to the east of the site forming the brook's flood plain. Woodland exists either side of the brook acting as a boundary along with the ridge line. Due to the height of the land west of the brook and the ridge line that raises the northern section of the site, development would be prominent from the Stourbridge Road as journeys are made north, as well as from the numerous public rights of way in the open countryside to the east. Development to the east of the brook would be extremely difficult, although it is flat, it would be prone to flooding, and there would also be access issues.

### **5.128 Landscape Sensitivity**

5.129 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

### **5.130 Agricultural Land Quality**

5.131 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile

agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **5.132 Historic Environment**

5.133 The site contains no Listed Buildings, is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and has no other statutory historic designations.

5.134 The site falls within the Catshill and Lickey End HECZ, as does the whole settlement of Catshill and Marlbrook. The historic environment in this zone is of low sensitivity and would be resilient to change. This classification would cause the least harm to historic environment assets if development occurred, in a District that has many high and medium sensitivity areas.

### **5.135 Green Infrastructure**

5.136 A large area covering the north of the site is covered by woodland with a great deal of mature trees, which is cover by a TPO and would restrict potential development. These trees extend further south along the sites watercourse forming a strong boundary with the field to the east. Other fields on this site are also bordered by mature hedgerow, many of which contain large trees. There is a public footpath running throughout the entire site which follows the line of the brook and adjacent trees. This path connects Catshill to the open countryside as well as providing footpath access to Bromsgrove Town. The PPG17 study identifies two playing fields to the east of the site; however, they are some distance away to be seriously affected.

5.137 The amenity value of the Catshill and Lickey End HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness with the lowest rating of 1. The historic environment does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining sense of place. However, the full potential may be unknown and there is, therefore scope for further investigations. These should be carried out as part of masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design to identify constraints and opportunities.

### **5.138 Sustainability**

5.139 The site is particularly close to a local pub and Catshill First and Middle School. Although the local shopping centre is nearby, it would need to be accessed via road, which is just over 800m away, which is just within walking distance. There is also a garden centre to the south of the site within easy reach. However, the GP surgery is over 800m. Catshill is well served by frequent bus services between Bromsgrove and the Birmingham conurbation, with links to many intermediate destinations. There are services along Stourbridge Road, which borders the site. The site lies beyond the five minute drive isochrones of both Barnt Green and Bromsgrove railway stations but this is the case for the whole of Catshill.

### **5.140 Summary**

5.141 This particular site is in a sustainable location but has a number of restrictions that would hinder development. A large proportion of the site is within Flood Zone 3 and would be prone to flooding. There are also a number of mature trees on the site, some of which form protected woodland. The site also has an extremely important Green Belt function in restricting urban sprawl and preventing Catshill coalescing with neighbouring settlements. Therefore this site is not currently suitable to contribute towards the initial housing target.

#### **5.142 2013 Update**

5.143 The northern part of this area (BDC142) was promoted through the SHLAA process. The site was not considered suitable for development due to its Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future

## **Area 6: Land at Hinton Fields**

### **5.144 Site Description**

5.145 The site is situated to the south-west of Catshill and is approximately 3.7 hectares in size. Hinton Fields forms the east, south and west boundary of the site, and Rocky Lane the north. The M5 motorway lies further to the west.

### **5.146 Site Assessments**

### **5.147 Site History**

5.148 This particular site was promoted during the Local Plan process as a possible ADR and has also been subject to a planning application. The Planning Application (2007/1276) was for eight affordable homes and was refused due to representing *“inappropriate development in the Green Belt that would harm the openness of the Green Belt and prejudice the purposes of Green Belt policy”*. A Planning Inspector also dismissed an appeal on the site.

### **5.149 Green Belt**

5.150 The entire site is within the Green Belt and assists in preventing encroachment into the wider countryside. Development here would have the adverse effect of reducing the gap between Catshill and Bromsgrove. Although bounded on all sides by roads or residential gardens, development in this location would also appear to be disjointed from the settlement of Catshill, as the residential area further north on the other side of Rocky Lane is bounded by steep ridgelines.



### **5.151 Flood Risk**

5.152 The site is located within flood zone 1, therefore has the lowest chance of flooding and there were no accounts of historic flooding identified as part of the SFRA Level 1.

### **5.153 Visual Appraisal**

5.154 This particular area slopes from south to north, which would result in development being prominent when viewed from the south. The site is well bounded by both existing residential development to the east, mature hedgerows to the north and west, and by woodland to the south. These boundaries would restrict short term views, but the height of the land would encourage development to be seen. The area is made up of a number of fields separated by fencing that are used for grazing, as well as residential gardens, which would mean there could be ownership constraints if the whole site was to be developed.

5.155 There are some agricultural buildings located in the centre of the site, however, they appear to be dilapidated and not in productive use. The Green Belt function of the site is extremely poignant as this location and it can be seen how the land restricts further encroachment of the countryside and aids the strategic gap that exists between Catshill and Bromsgrove.

### **5.156 Landscape Sensitivity**

5.157 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

### **5.158 Agricultural Land Quality**

5.159 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be no prospect of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present

on this site. The fact that no high quality land would be lost weighs in favour of the development of this particular site

#### **5.160 Historic Environment**

- 5.161 The site contains no Listed Buildings, is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and has no other statutory historic designations.
- 5.162 The site falls within the Catshill and Lickey End HECZ, as does the whole settlement of Catshill and Marlbrook. The historic environment in this zone is of low sensitivity and would be resilient to change. This classification would cause the least harm to historic environment assets if development occurred, in a District that has many high and medium sensitivity areas.

#### **5.163 Green Infrastructure**

- 5.164 Most of the site is currently used for grazing purposes and has been separated into four separate fields by fencing. Mature hedgerows and trees form both the northern border with Rocky Lane and the western border with part of Hinton Fields. There is a large area of woodland to the south, consisting of both mature and semi-mature trees. There are also a number of trees situated in the centre of the site. There are no public footpaths on the site, but a footpath can be found directly north leading into Catshill and to the south-east leading to the open countryside.
- 5.165 The amenity value of the Catshill and Lickey End HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness with the lowest rating of 1. The historic environment does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining sense of place. However, the full potential may be unknown and there is, therefore scope for further investigations. These should be carried out as part of masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design to identify constraints and opportunities.

### **5.166 Sustainability**

5.167 Catshill is well served by frequent bus services between Bromsgrove and the Birmingham conurbation, with links to many intermediate destinations. There is no service on the nearest main road, Rocky Lane, but there are services along Stourbridge Road, some 200m away. The site lies beyond the five minute drive isochrones of both Barnt Green and Bromsgrove railway stations but this is the case for the whole of Catshill. Catshill local centre, where the majority of shops are located is just over 800m, away from the site. The BDLP Inquiry Inspector felt that there were more sustainable options within Catshill.

### **5.168 Summary**

5.169 This site has a particularly important Green Belt function in preventing coalescence between Bromsgrove and Catshill. There are also a number of other more sustainable sites around Catshill in relation to the local amenities and public transport links. In conclusion this site is not currently suitable to contribute towards the initial housing target.

### **5.170 2013 Update**

5.171 The large agricultural fields to the north of the area (BDC1), as well as some residential gardens to the south-east (BDC94) were promoted as part of the SHLAA process. The sites were not considered suitable for development due to their Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that both sites should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

## **Area 7: Land to the west of Stourbridge Road**

### **5.172 Site Description**

5.173 This area of land is situated to the west of Catshill, on a parcel of land that is approximately 6.1 hectares in size. The majority of the fields are in agricultural use, whereas some are just scrub land. The M5 motorway runs along the western boundary and a combination of Stourbridge Road, dwellings and Christ Church Cemetery provide the boundary to the east. The gradient of the land slopes from the south to its highest point in the north.

### **5.174 Site Assessment**

### **5.175 Site History**

5.176 The southern two fields were promoted as part of the Local Plan process to be included as ADRs. This land assists in protecting the countryside from encroachment, a view shared by the BDLP Inspector. It was therefore ruled out as a potential ADR location.

### **5.177 Green Belt**

5.178 This site is located entirely in the designated Green Belt and protects the countryside from encroachment of the urban area. Although the M5 motorway would act as a strong defensible boundary, due to the shape of the land, development of the elevated central section would break the skyline and form an obvious and incongruous intrusion into the Green Belt. The land rises steeply from the south of the site to a high point in the middle, which gradually slopes downhill further north. The land also rises steeply from the east so a high point would be visible from the majority of Catshill.

### **5.179 Flood Risk**

5.180 The site is located within flood zone 1, therefore has the lowest chance of flooding and there were no accounts of historic flooding identified as part of the SFRA Level 1.

### **5.181 Visual Appraisal**

5.182 The topography of this area is particularly apparent as the site rises steeply from the south to a high point in the middle of the site. This view point can be seen from the motorway to the east and from the motorway bridge to the south. Due to the height of the land, development would also be prominent from the existing settlement to the east. Although the M5 would create a logical Green Belt boundary to the west; this area of land acts as a Green Belt buffer, and due to its topography has an import Green Belt function that would be compromised if development were to take place.

### **5.183 Landscape Sensitivity**

5.184 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

### **5.185 Agricultural Land Quality**

5.186 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be no prospect of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. The fact that no high quality land would be lost weighs in favour of the development of this particular site

### **5.187 Historic Environment**

5.188 The Grade II listed Christ Church is located on the opposite Road of the site and the cemetery is located on the eastern part of the actual site. The

site is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and has no other statutory historic designations.

5.189 The site falls within the Catshill and Lickey End HECZ, as does the whole settlement of Catshill and Marlbrook. The historic environment in this zone is of low sensitivity and would be resilient to change. This classification would cause the least harm to historic environment assets if development occurred, in a District that has many high and medium sensitivity areas.

#### **5.190 Green Infrastructure**

5.191 There is a public footpath through the middle of the site connecting the village of Bournheath with Catshill via a footbridge across the M5 motorway. The land rises steeply from its southern end, levels off in the middle to form a plateau of higher ground, and descends at the northern extremity. The boundary separating the top two fields, as well as along the boundary with the M5 motorway is lined with mature hedgerow and a number of trees.

5.192 The amenity value of the Catshill and Lickey End HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness with the lowest rating of 1. The historic environment does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining sense of place. However, the full potential may be unknown and there is, therefore scope for further investigations. These should be carried out as part of masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design to identify constraints and opportunities.

#### **5.193 Sustainability**

5.194 In terms of sustainability, the land is close to local facilities in Catshill (approximately 500m) and well served by buses to Bromsgrove and the conurbation. The site lies beyond the five minute drive isochrones of both

Barnt Green and Bromsgrove railway stations but this is the case for the whole of Catshill.

### **5.195 Summary**

5.196 Although this site is in a relatively sustainable location in terms of Catshill's services, the Green Belt concerns are a major factor. For this reason the site would not be appropriate to contribute towards the initial housing target at the current time. The Local Plan Inspector also detailed that there were also a number of physical and environmental constraints in regards to the site. The likely traffic noise nuisance and pollution affecting those parts of the site closest to the motorway and the lack of vehicular access also reduced the development potential of the site. The high gradient across the site from south to north would result in any potential development being clearly visible.

### **5.197 Update**

5.198 This site (BDC96) was promoted through the SHLAA process. The site was not considered suitable for development due to its Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

## **Area 8: Land at Church Road**

### **5.199 Site Description**

5.200 This site consists of a vacant, 'triangular' parcel of land that is approximately 6.12 hectares in size. The site forms a wedge of open land separating suburban housing development in the main upper core of Catshill from frontage residential development flanking the east side of the Stourbridge Road. The M5 motorway runs to the north-west, with the southern boundary, defined by Church Road at the 'apex' of the site. The Battlefield Brook runs from the north to the south and there are a number of mature trees scattered across the site.

### **5.201 Site Assessment**

#### **5.202 Site History**

5.203 This site was adopted as an ADR as part of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan. As part of the Local Plan process the council were concerned that the site assisted in preventing encroachment of urban development into the surrounding countryside and has considerable open space value. The Inspector did not share this view as development had occurred all around this particular location and in 1989 the site itself was identified by the Council as part of a Preferred Housing Site, with the District Planning Officer commenting that the development would 'round off' the settlement.

#### **5.204 Green Belt**

5.205 Whilst the site was removed from the Green Belt it is important to consider the Green Belt function of the site and any implications on the wider Green Belt surrounding Catshill. The M5 motorway acts as a defensible Green Belt boundary to the north and residential development forms the east and west boundaries. The Inspector states that this site appears to be *"nothing more than a wedge of open space dominated by urban influences on all*



*sides and suffering from urban fringe problems such as trespass and fly tipping*". The Inspector therefore concluded that the site no longer serves a vital Green Belt purpose due to the construction of the M5 motorway.

#### **5.206 Flood Risk**

5.207 The Battlefield Brook runs through the whole of the site from north to south. The SFRA Level 1 indicates there are misalignments of the flood zone at the north end of the site and that approximately 30% of the site is within Flood Zone 2 and approximately 35% is within Flood Zone 3. These factors would need to be considered during development and a site specific Flood Risk Assessment carried out.

#### **5.208 Visual Appraisal**

5.209 This particular site is generally flat and has the Battlefield Brook running from north to south. The site can only be viewed from the relatively narrow entrance from the south along Church Road. Dwellings along Stourbridge Road restrict views from the west and existing residential areas restrict views from the east. The M5 acts as a boundary to the north and the view to the site is restricted due to a tree lined embankment. This embankment would stop any development being prominent and it cannot be viewed from the nearby motorway bridge. There are a number of trees on the site, but there are also clear signs of trespassing on the land. A small narrow access exists to the north-west; however the site cannot be viewed from this location due to existing dwellings. Due to the tight boundaries of the site, there does not appear to be any Green Belt credentials to the site.

#### **5.210 Landscape Sensitivity**

5.211 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

### **5.212 Agricultural Land Quality**

5.213 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be no prospect of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. The fact that no high quality land would be lost weighs in favour of the development of this particular site.

### **5.214 Historic Environment**

5.215 Christ Church is a Grade II listed building situated at the corner of Stourbridge Road and Church Road, directly adjacent to the site. Any development will therefore have to be designed sensitively so as not to harm the character and setting of the listed building. The site is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and has no other statutory historic designations.

5.216 The site falls within the Catshill and Lickey End HECZ, as does the whole settlement of Catshill and Marlbrook. The historic environment in this zone is of low sensitivity and would be resilient to change. This classification would cause the least harm to historic environment assets if development occurred, in a District that has many high and medium sensitivity areas.

### **5.217 Green Infrastructure**

5.218 The area is not in agricultural use and is mainly made up of unused scrub land. The Battlefield Brook runs throughout the site and there are a number of trees within the site that can be utilised as part of green infrastructure proposals. A small number of these trees are subject to a Tree Preservation Order and would need to be protected. Part of the area once had Special Wildlife Site status but lost that designation, but the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust believes it has the potential to be restored, which could possibly be incorporated in a planning application. A large area to the east and north-east has been designated as open space as

part of the Local Plan and this area could be linked to green spaces within proposed development. There are no public rights of way on the site itself, but there is a public footpath on the opposite side of Church Road, which leads to access over the M5 motorway and to the further countryside.

5.219 The amenity value of the Catshill and Lickey End HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness with the lowest rating of 1. The historic environment does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining sense of place. However, the full potential may be unknown and there is, therefore scope for further investigations. These should be carried out as part of masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design to identify constraints and opportunities.

#### **5.220 Sustainability**

5.221 Regarding sustainability, the site is some 4.7km from Bromsgrove railway station, yet is within easy reach of bus corridors with services to Bromsgrove and Birmingham. There is no railway station within easy reach of Catshill so this factor is not considered a restraint to development. There are a number of services and facilities less than 400m from the site, including the local shopping area; doctors surgery; first, middle and special schools; public houses and churches.

#### **5.222 Summary**

5.223 Although there are some of physical and environmental constraints to the development of this site, they would not restrict it being used for residential purposes. The issue of flooding would confine the potential area of development, but as stated by the BDLP Inspector, it would not preclude a reasonable housing yield. The site is an ADR, has a limited Green Belt function and the M5 motorway provides a good defensible boundary. This added to the general sustainability and the lower

agricultural land quality make this site the most suitable in Catshill for contributing to the initial housing target.

#### **5.224 2013 Update**

- 5.225 The site was originally promoted for development through the SHLAA process. Although flooding and biodiversity issues were recognised; the site was not considered to have any significant constraints and was therefore thought to be suitable, available and deliverable. Previous SHLAAs identified that the site could accommodate approximately 80 dwellings.
- 5.226 Progress on the site has evolved and following the publication of the DCS2 an application for outline planning permission (11/0343) was submitted for 80 dwellings on the site. This was granted permission at Planning Committee on Monday 10th October 2011. A reserved matters application (2012/0586) was approved during 2012. Plans for the scheme indicate that public open space located in the east of the site encompasses the Battlefield Brook, the flood compensation plains, existing trees and ecological habitats. It creates a green corridor within the heart of the development which unifies the perimeter development zones around it. The corridor is designed to extend to the northern boundary and encompass existing badger sets. Construction began on site in summer 2013 meaning that the development will be completed within 5 years.

### **5.227 Overall Conclusions for Catshill**

5.228 In total eight sites have been considered around Catshill and have been through the sustainability process and therefore assessed against the sustainability objectives. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) identified Area 8 performed best due to close proximity to existing facilities and services at Catshill centre and the opportunities to travel by sustainable modes in the form of buses and trains. This supported the findings of this area assessment and therefore the land at Church Road is considered the most suitable and appropriate to contribute to the initial housing target.

5.229 There are a number of physical constraints in terms of flooding and environmental issues which would need to be addressed, but this would not restrict residential development if designed sympathetically. The Green Belt function of the site is somewhat limited, hence its designation as an ADR and has defensible boundaries in the form of the M5 motorway and other residential development. As mentioned previously, Area 8 is also in close proximity to Catshill's local centre, as well as bus routes to Bromsgrove Town.

### **5.230 2013 Update**

5.231 Area 8 was included as a potential development site within the DCS2 which went out to consultation between January and April 2011. There were a total of 42 responses in relation to Catshill. Some concerns expressed included loss of wildlife habitats, the land being in a flood plain, inadequacy of highway infrastructure with adverse impact of development on congestion and safety and adverse impact on local infrastructure.

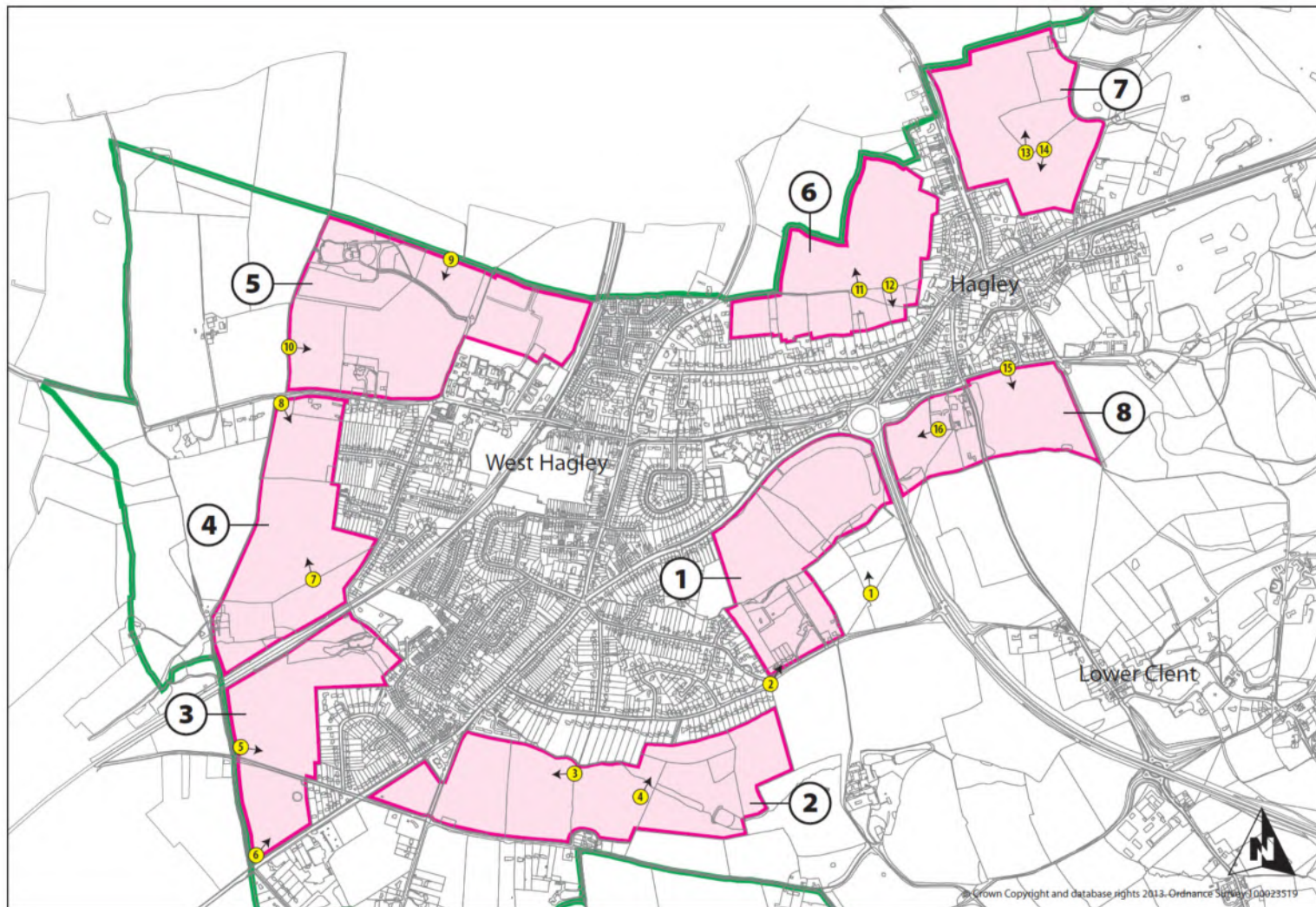
5.232 A response was also received by site promotor who supported the allocation of land at Area 8. They highlight that the site is suitable for residential development and is in a sustainable location, although they commented due to constraints on site 80 dwellings can be accommodated without considerable earth moving exercise to alter the gradients for roads and compensatory flood provision opposed to the 100 proposed.

- 5.233 Each individual comment was carefully considered by the Council and detailed responses to these comments have been published on the Council website. It was considered that many of the concerns raised in relation to the site could be addressed either through minor wording changes to policies or through infrastructure contributions. On balance it was felt that none of the issues raised were so fundamental that the site should not continue to be proposed through the plan making process.
- 5.234 Following the major changes in national and regional planning which included the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework and the revocation of the RSS on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2013 this site assessment study was reconsidered. Whilst these national changes are fundamental they ultimately do not significantly alter the findings of this study. The NPPF focusses on delivering growth in sustainable manner. The testing of options through this method will help to ensure that the most sustainable outcome is achieved.
- 5.235 As mentioned within the site assessment, outline and reserved matters permissions have now been granted on the site. Construction began on site in summer 2013 meaning that the development will be completed within 5 years.
- 5.236 In light of the above the proposed allocation of land at Church Road will be included within the Proposed Submission version of the Bromsgrove District Plan.

## **6. Hagley Assessment**

### **6.1 Introduction**

- 6.2 The settlement is located in the north west of Bromsgrove District and is the second largest in the District, the largest being Bromsgrove town. Hagley has a wide range of services and facilities on the Worcester Road and has good public transport links with the conurbation with a train station and bus services. Eight possible development sites have been identified around the periphery of Hagley, which are shown on the plan below. Each of these sites will be assessed against a range of criteria to see if any are suitable to contribute to the delivery of 4,000 homes in the District. All sites have been visited as part of the appraisal process and a selection of photos from each site are attached at Appendix 4. All photos were taken from publicly accessible positions and the approximate locations where the photos were taken are shown on the map 4 below.



Map 4: Hagley Areas with photo viewpoints



## **Area 1: Land adjacent Kidderminster Road and Stourbridge Road**

### **6.3 Site Description**

- 6.4 The gross site area is 21.9ha and is located on the eastern side of West Hagley. The site is bound by the A456 to the north, the A491 to the east, residential development to the west and Western Road to the south. The land slopes upwards from south-west to north-east and is predominately pasture land with the exception of a small number of detached dwellings on large plots. There is a steady rise in land levels from approximately 100m AOD at the western end of the site to approximately 128m AOD in the north east.

### **6.5 Site Assessment**

### **6.6 Site History**

- 6.7 The land consists of a combination of 3 ADR's within the Local Plan and these are HAG 2, HAG 2A and HAG 2B. All three of these ADRs were included within the Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan that was the subject of the Public Inquiry in 2001. HAG 2 was first designated as an ADR in the Hagley/Clent Local Plan in 1991.

- 6.8 HAG 2A was promoted by the Council as an ADR at the Local Plan Inquiry. The Inspector agreed with the Council commenting:

*"HAG2A is a sustainable location. Its identification as an ADR would not seriously compromise Green Belt functions. Furthermore, the land is not unduly constrained. The need for the ADR constitutes the 'exceptional circumstances' necessary for the release of confirmed Green Belt land."*

- 6.9 HAG 2B was promoted by developers at the Local Plan Inquiry in 2001 as appropriate for designation as an ADR. The Inspector supported this designation stating:

*"Given that the land is not contiguous with the West Midlands conurbation, release of this site as an ADR would not compromise the Green Belt function of checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas. Moreover, there*

*are no other settlements close to Hagley that would cause neighbouring towns to merge. The only Green Belt purpose of direct relevance is, I believe, to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment... The degree of encroachment here would not be so severe so as to prove unacceptable.”*

## **6.10 Green Belt**

- 6.11 Whilst the site is no longer in the Green Belt it is important to consider the wider Green Belt implications of developing the site. The site has well defined boundaries with Western Road to the south and a dense hedgerow to the east of Algoa House which could prevent any wider sprawl into the Green Belt. Development here would not lead to the coalescence of settlements and in many ways could be seen to create a logical defensible boundary.

## **6.12 Flood Risk**

- 6.13 The site was assessed within both the Council's Level 1 and Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). The Gallows Brook that runs through the site was modelled as part of the Level 2 assessment. The vast majority of the site falls within flood zone 1 but a small percentage of the site adjacent to the watercourse falls within zones 2, 3a and 3b. The SFRA recommends that a sequential approach should be adopted to the layout of any development within the site with vulnerable uses avoiding the small areas that are within flood zone 3a and 3b. A site specific FRA and drainage impact assessment should be prepared to support any planning application.

## **6.14 Visual Appraisal**

- 6.15 The dense band of trees located around the north and eastern boundaries of the site significantly reduce views available into the site. Short distance views are available from Western Road where the steady rise in land levels towards the north east corner can be seen. Longer distance views of the site are quite limited and development would be viewed against the context of the built form of Hagley. Development in this location could potentially 'round off' the settlement and is not considered to be unduly prominent.

### **6.16 Landscape Sensitivity**

- 6.17 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

### **6.18 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 6.19 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there are significant amounts of land across the district where there are some prospects of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **6.20 Historic Environment**

- 6.21 The site contains no listed buildings, is not within or adjacent a conservation area and contains no other statutory historic designations.
- 6.22 The site falls within the Holy Cross HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity to change. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, the fact that most of the District falls within the high and medium sensitivity areas means that development in these areas is inevitable. Historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

### **6.23 Green Infrastructure**

- 6.24 A thick band of trees are located on the eastern and northern boundaries of the site and a traditional orchard is located within the boundary of the property Strathearn. This is recognised as a priority habitat with the Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). A small number of trees are also covered by a TPO and these are located in the most western part of the site. These trees are subject to a group Tree Preservation Order. A number of mature

hedgerows are located within the site. Mature trees and important hedgerows would need to be retained as part of any development.

6.25 The only water feature is the Gallows Brook that runs east to west through the heart of the site. There are no public rights of way within the boundary of the site.

6.26 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site contributes towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. Constraints and opportunities for conservation and promotion should be addressed during masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design. This zone has high potential, meaning a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

#### **6.27 Sustainability**

6.28 The site is conveniently located within the settlement meaning that the main services such as shops, schools and recreational facilities are all within walking distance (approximately 800m). In addition bus services are available on the Kidderminster Road which provides links to locations such as Kidderminster, Stourbridge and Birmingham City Centre. The train station is just over 1km from the site and trains run at 30 minute intervals into Birmingham City Centre. It is considered that the site is in a sustainable location.

#### **6.29 Air Quality**

6.30 An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) has been designated at the junction of the Stourbridge and Kidderminster Road. The deterioration in air quality has primarily been caused by congestion at this junction. Whilst monitoring of the AQMA is underway additional detailed testing will be required to ensure that levels of air quality within the site are acceptable to determine if any mitigation measures may be required and whether there is an opportunity to improve air quality in the local area.

### **6.31 Summary**

6.32 The site is in a sustainable location that is close to a range of services and the Green Belt function of the site appears to be fairly limited. In addition there are strong defensible Green Belt boundaries that limit the potential for further encroachment into the Green Belt. Whilst air quality is currently a concern it is expected that appropriate mitigation measures can be identified after further investigation should development be proposed. The presence of TPO's, a traditional orchard and mature trees reduces the net developable area of the site but it is considered that the site is suitable to contribute to the delivery of homes within the plan period.

### **6.33 2013 Update**

6.34 The site is not in single ownership and has been promoted for development in through the SHLAA process in 3 smaller parcels by the various land owners. The 3 submissions can be broken down as follows:

- Land adjacent Kidderminster & Stourbridge Road (BDC35B)
- Strathearn (BDC189), Rose & Thicknall Cottage (BDC188), Western Road
- Algoa House, Western Road (BDC51)

6.35 The combined sites are not considered to have any significant constraints and are therefore thought to be suitable, available and deliverable.

6.36 Planning applications have been submitted on 3 parcels of the site. Outline approval was granted on appeal for 38 dwellings for land at Brook Crescent (2010/0378).

6.37 An outline planning application (12/0593) has now been submitted and approved on a significant proportion of the land that is bounded by the Kidderminster and Stourbridge Road (BDC35B). The application is for up to 175 dwellings, open space and B1 employment. A number of detailed studies were submitted with the application and these include a Flood Risk Assessment, Air Quality Study, Landscape Appraisal and a Transport

Assessment. A reserved matters application has now been approved on the site and construction is expected to start in early 2014.

- 6.38 A separate outline application (12/0875) has also been submitted in relation to the land at Strathearn, Rose and Thicknall Cottage on Western Road. This for 70 dwellings and there is a resolution to grant approval, subject to the signing of a S106 agreement.

## **Area 2: Land at Worcester Road**

### **6.39 Site Description**

- 6.40 The whole site is approximately 35 hectares in size and the land is primarily in agricultural use. The site is located south of the built up area of Hagley. The sites western boundary lies adjacent to the A456 Kidderminster Road South, with Thicknall Lane forming the site's southern boundary. Residential development is located to the north of the site with open farmland located to the south. The arable farmland is divided into a number of separate fields with the A450 Worcester Road dissecting the site. There is a steady rise in land levels from approximately 93m AOD at the western end of the site to approximately 120m AOD in the east.

### **6.41 Site History**

- 6.42 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **6.43 Site Assessment**

#### **6.44 Green Belt**

- 6.45 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and therefore it is important to consider the Green Belt function of the site. Development could potentially lead to significant encroachment into the Green Belt south of Hagley. Whilst roads provide defensible boundaries to the south and west there are no defining features preventing further sprawl to the east. The villages of Broome and Holy Cross are located south of Hagley and development in this location would reduce the gap to these settlements and therefore in the future could potentially lead to coalescence.

#### **6.46 Flood Risk**

- 6.47 A Brook flows across the northern end of the site and therefore the site does partially fall within flood zones 2 and 3 meaning that there is a significant chance of the land flooding. Whilst development could simply be avoided in

that part of the site a site specific flood risk assessment would be required to test the effect of development on the site.

#### **6.48 Visual Appraisal**

- 6.49 The site has a strong relationship with the settlement of Hagley and is generally quite low lying. Views into the site are limited to short distance views from Thicknall Lane to the South and the Worcester Road to the West. Overall it is considered that development on this site is unlikely to appear visually obtrusive.

#### **6.50 Landscape Sensitivity**

- 6.51 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

#### **6.52 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 6.53 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **6.54 Historic Environment**

- 6.55 Two listed buildings are located adjacent to the site. Thicknall Farmhouse (Grade II) is located on the south boundary of the site and Field House (Grade II \*) is located to the east of the site. Any development would need to respect the setting of these listed buildings.
- 6.56 The site falls within the Holy Cross HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of high sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development would have a significant impact on the historic environment. It is



preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

### **6.57 Green Infrastructure**

6.58 Two public rights of way are located within the site, and both these link Newfield Road and Thicknall Lane. These could be used to provide access to the wider countryside and also to provide a more direct pedestrian link to facilities in Hagley. A brook, which is a tributary to the Gallows Brook is the main water feature that flows through the site from east to west. A small pool is also associated with the brook. There are two groups of mature trees in the eastern part of the site. A number of mature hedgerows are located throughout the site providing a clear distinction between each of the fields. Important hedgerows and mature trees should be retained if development occurs.

6.59 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site contributes towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. Constraints and opportunities for conservation and promotion should be addressed during masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design. This zone has high potential, meaning a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **6.60 Sustainability**

6.61 The site is just beyond 800m of the local centre within Hagley thereby providing reasonable access to retail and health facilities. Bus services are available adjacent to the site on the Kidderminster Road South and the railway station is just over 1km from the site. It is therefore considered that the site is in a fairly sustainable location.

### **6.62 Summary**

6.63 The site is within a relatively sustainable location in Hagley and, in physical terms, the site is relatively unconstrained apart from the flooding risk at the northern end of the site. The site lies within a zone of high historic sensitivity

where development is less able to be accommodated and should be avoided. Furthermore the site is in the Green Belt and performs vital Green Belt functions in terms of preventing coalescence of settlements for example at Broome and Holy Cross and encroachment into the wider countryside. Due to its Green Belt function it is not considered that the site is currently suitable to contribute to the delivery of new housing.

#### **6.64 2013 Update**

6.65 The site is within 2 separate ownerships and has been promoted through the SHLAA as 2 separate sites as follows:

- Land Between Kidderminster and Worcester Road (BDC10)
- Land at Worcester Road (BDC185)

6.66 Both sites are not currently considered to be suitable for development due to their Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that the sites should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

### **Area 3: Land North of Kidderminster Road South**

#### **6.67 Site Description**

6.68 The site measures 13.12ha in size and is located to the south west of Hagley. The site is bounded by the Kidderminster Road to the south, the railway line to the north, Stoney Lane to the west, which abuts the District boundary with Wyre Forest and residential development to the east. The site is greenfield and is primarily used as pasture land. There is a steady rise in land levels from approximately 80m AOD in the most northerly part of the site to approximately 90m AOD in the south.

#### **6.69 Site Assessment**

#### **6.70 Site History**

6.71 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

#### **6.72 Green Belt**

6.73 The site is located entirely within the designated Green Belt and the development of the site could potentially lead to significant encroachment into the wider Green Belt. Whilst the site is well contained to the north by the railway line and the south by the Kidderminster Road it would set a precedent for development further west. Continued growth in this direction would reduce the gap between the settlements of Hagley and Blakedown (the latter being located outside the District boundary in Wyre Forest District) and could potentially lead to coalescence. The site appears to have an important Green Belt function in preventing Hagley sprawling westwards.

#### **6.74 Flood Risk**

6.75 The northern end of the site partially falls within flood zones 2 and 3 meaning that there is a significant chance of the land flooding. Whilst development will not primarily be located in that part of the site a site specific flood risk assessment would be required to test the effect of development in the area.

## **6.76 Visual Appraisal**

- 6.77 The northern parcel of land is relatively low lying and relates well to the existing built form of Hagley. However, land levels rise more sharply on the southern parcel of land. There are concerns that development on the southern edge of the site could be prominent when viewed from the south and west. If development was to occur a carefully considered landscape strategy would be required to ensure that development would not appear unduly prominent.

## **6.78 Landscape Sensitivity**

- 6.79 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

## **6.80 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 6.81 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there are significant amounts of land across the District where there are some prospects of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

## **6.82 Historic Environment**

- 6.83 The site falls within the Sandstone Estate Lands HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, the fact that most of the District falls within the high and medium sensitivity areas means that some development in these areas is inevitable. Historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if carefully designed.
- 6.84 There are no designated heritage assets within or adjacent to the site.

## **6.85 Green Infrastructure**

6.86 There is a bridleway located along the western boundary and a public right of way adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site. Both of these could be used to provide access to the wider countryside.

6.87 A Local Nature Reserve is located at the northern end of the site thereby reducing the developable area to 9.62ha. In addition, the same area forms part of the Churchill and Blakedown Valleys Special Wildlife Site (SWS). This SWS is a complex site consisting of narrow wetland habitats following about 7km of brook valley. The brooks and mill pools contain a wide mix of flora and fauna. Subsequently any development would need to demonstrate that it could maintain biodiversity and landscape quality. A number of mature hedgerows are located around the boundary of the site. Important hedgerows should be retained if development occurs.

6.88 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site contributes towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. Constraints and opportunities for conservation and promotion should be addressed during the masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design stages. This zone also has medium potential for the presence of historic assets. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

## **6.89 Sustainability**

6.89 Whilst bus services are within easy reach on the Kidderminster Road this does not appear to be one of the more sustainable locations in Hagley. The local centre is over 1km from the site and this is where many of the key facilities are located such as the GP surgery, dentist and retail facilities. In addition, Hagley Primary School is approximately 1.5km from the site, which is considered to be beyond a reasonable walking distance

## **6.90 Summary**

6.91 In conclusion the site is constrained by a Local Nature Reserve and an area of flood risk however this could potentially be mitigated by not developing the

most northern part of the site. The site appears to perform critical Green Belt functions of preventing encroachment into the countryside and avoiding the coalescence of settlements. In addition the site is over a 1km away from the majority of local facilities in the settlement. The site is therefore not currently considered suitable to contribute to the delivery of housing in the District.

#### **6.92 2013 Update**

6.93 Part of the site has been promoted through the SHLAA process. The land north of Stakenbridge Lane (BDC35A) is not currently considered to be suitable for development due to its Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

## **Area 4: Land South of Brake Lane**

### **6.94 Site Description**

6.95 The site is approximately 18 hectares in size and the land is primarily in agricultural use consisting of 3 fields of varying sizes. The site is located to the west of the built up area of Hagley. The site's northern boundary is Brake Lane and extends south to the railway line. Open countryside is located to the west of the site which rises to the wooded hills of Brakemill Plantation/Palmers Hill. There is a steady rise in land levels from approximately 90m AOD at the southern end of the site to approximately 100m AOD in the north.

### **6.96 Site Assessment**

### **6.97 Site History**

6.98 The site was promoted as a possible ADR by developers at the Inquiry into the Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan. The Inspector did not support the site stating:

*"To my mind the lack of an obvious and defensible western boundary would create pressure for extending development for as far as the topography would reasonably allow. This would lead to at least a doubling of the site area at the expense of this very attractive landscape. I consider that such encroachment into the surrounding countryside would be quite unacceptable."*

### **6.99 Green Belt**

6.100 The site appears to perform the important Green Belt function of preventing encroachment into the wider countryside. Whilst there may be strong boundaries to the north and south, the lack of a defining boundary to the west could potentially cause significant harm to the wider Green Belt.

### **6.101 Flood Risk**

6.102 A Brook runs across the southern boundary of the site and therefore the site partially falls within flood zones 2 and 3 meaning that there is a significant chance of the land flooding. Whilst development will not primarily be located

in that part of the site a site specific flood risk assessment would be required to test the effect of development on the site.

### **6.103 Visual Appraisal**

6.104 Short distance views into the site are available from the public footpath along the western boundary, Brake Lane to the north and Sweetpool Lane to the east. Whilst the land in the southern part of the site is relatively low lying, it does dip away from Hagley and as a consequence has a stronger relationship with the wider countryside.

### **6.105 Landscape Sensitivity**

6.106 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity to change. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

### **6.107 Agricultural Land Quality**

6.108 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there are significant amounts of land across the district where there are some prospects of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **6.109 Historic Environment**

6.110 The site falls within the Sandstone Estate Lands HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, the fact that most of the District falls within the high and medium sensitivity areas means that development in some of these areas is inevitable. Historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

6.111 There are no designated heritage assets within or adjacent to the site.



### **6.112 Green Infrastructure**

6.113 A small area within the southern part of the site forms part of the Churchill and Blakedown Valleys Special Wildlife Site (SWS). This SWS is a complex site consisting of narrow wetland habitats following about 7km of brook valley. The brooks and mill pools contain a wide mix of flora and fauna. Any proposed development would need to assess any potential impact and take appropriate mitigating action, for example, to at least avoid development in this SWS.

6.114 A historic footpath known as Monarch's Way is located adjacent to the site and another public right of way dissects the site. Both of these rights of way could be used to provide access to the wider countryside and make an important contribution towards the Green Infrastructure network.

6.115 As much of the land is actively farmed the majority of any habitats are likely to be located on field boundaries. Boundaries include dense hedgerows and a small number of mature trees. Important hedgerows and mature trees should be retained if development occurs.

6.116 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site contributes towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. Constraints and opportunities for conservation and promotion should be addressed during the masterplanning and GI design stages. This zone also has medium potential for the presence of historic assets. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **6.117 Sustainability**

6.118 The site is within 300m of Haybridge High School and Hagley Catholic High School, both of which are located on Brake Lane. The train station is within comfortable walking distance and the site is only 600m from the local centre. The nearest bus services are available on Worcester Road. Overall this considered to be a very sustainable location.

### **6.119 Summary**

6.120 The site is within a sustainable location in Hagley and in physical terms, the site is relatively unconstrained apart from the flood risk and SWS at the southern end of the site. The site is in the Green Belt and appears to lack a defensible boundary along the western edge meaning that development on the site could lead to further encroachment into the wider countryside in the future. Due to its Green Belt function it is not currently considered that the site is suitable to contribute to the housing delivery.

### **6.121 2013 Update**

6.122 Part of the site has been promoted through the SHLAA process. The field directly south of Brake Lane (BDC198) is not currently considered to be suitable for development due to its Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

## **Area 5: Land North of Brake Lane**

### **6.123 Site Description**

6.124 The site is approximately 30 hectares in size and the land has a variety of uses including school playing fields, residential properties and 2 fields used for pasture. The site is located in the north western corner of Hagley north of Brake Lane. The railway line provides the site boundary to the east and the northern boundary of the site is the boundary between Bromsgrove and Dudley Councils. Land levels rise sharply across the site from approximately 100m AOD in the east to approximately 140m AOD in the north east corner meaning there is a significant slope across the site.

### **6.125 Site Assessment**

### **6.126 Site History**

6.127 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **6.128 Green Belt**

6.129 The site is within the designated Green Belt and plays a critical role in maintaining a gap between Hagley and the West Midlands conurbation to the north. Development in this location would erode what is already a modest gap and potentially lead to coalescence with the West Midlands conurbation. With the exception of Haybridge School the railway line and Brake Lane act as defensible Green Belt boundaries in this area of Hagley. Development would lead to the loss of these defining boundaries which would lead to encroachment and the sprawl of development into the wider countryside.

### **6.130 Flood Risk**

6.131 The site is entirely within flood zone 1 and is therefore considered to have the lowest risk of flooding.

### **6.132 Visual Appraisal**

6.133 In visual terms the site can be split into 4 defined areas as follows : the playing fields associated with Haybridge School, the property known as 'The Woodlands', the field west of 'South Bank' and the field east of 'South Bank'. The parcel of land west of 'South Bank' has a poor visual relationship with the town. Land levels fall from east to west across the site meaning that the site relates more to the wider countryside. 'The Birches' is located in the north east corner of the site which is well screened by mature trees. Short distance views are available into the farmland east of 'South Bank' from both the North Worcestershire footpath and Brake Lane. Although this parcel of land is well contained and relates well to Hagley. No development should occur west of 'South Bank' as it would be visually intrusive when viewed from the west.

### **6.134 Landscape Sensitivity**

6.135 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity to change. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

### **6.136 Agricultural Land Quality**

6.137 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there are significant amounts of land across the District where there are some prospects of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **6.138 Historic Environment**

6.139 The site falls within the Sandstone Estate Lands HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, the fact that most of the District falls within the high and medium sensitivity areas means that

development in these areas is inevitable. Historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

- 6.140 The site contains one listed building, the Birches (Grade II). This building has a large curtilage that significantly reduces the net developable area of the site as a whole. Any development would also need to be sympathetic to the listed building and not harm its setting.

#### **6.141 Green Infrastructure**

- 6.142 One public footpath runs through the heart of the site and others are located along the western and northern boundaries of the site. These footpaths could be used to provide good pedestrian links into Hagley and also access into the wider countryside.
- 6.143 There is a woodland within the site which forms part of the national inventory of woodland and trees. Woodlands are also priority habitats within the Worcestershire BAP and therefore the woodland should be protected if any development occurs. This wooded area and other groupings of mature trees are primarily located within the curtilage of the Beeches. Mature hedgerows are also present within the site along field boundaries. There are significant amounts of green infrastructure that would need to be retained if development occurs in this area.
- 6.144 There are no water features within the site boundary.
- 6.145 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site contributes towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. Constraints and opportunities for conservation and promotion should be addressed during masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design. This zone also has medium potential for the presence of historic assets. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **6.146 Sustainability**

6.147 The site is located next to both high schools in Hagley and also within easy walking distance to the train station. The local centre is over 1km away meaning some residents may choose to drive access the GP and retail facilities.

6.148 Part of the identified site is the school playing fields. These provide an essential facility for pupils which is likely to enhance their health and well-being and therefore development would not be permitted on this part of the site, unless alternative suitable provision could be made.

### **6.149 Summary**

6.150 3 parcels of land within the site are considered to be unsuitable for development. These are the school playing fields, the Birches which is a listed building and has a woodland within the curtilage and also the field west of 'South Bank' which has a poor visual relationship with the town. The total site is within the Green Belt and provides the critical functions of preventing coalescence between Hagley and the West Midlands MUA and also encroachment into the wider countryside west of Hagley. Due to its important Green Belt function it is not considered that the site is currently suitable to contribute to housing delivery.

### **6.151 2013 Update**

6.152 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

## **Area 6: Land North of Middlefield Lane**

### **6.153 Site Description**

6.154 The site is approximately 15 hectares in size and the land is primarily used as pasture. The site is located to the north of the built up area of Hagley. The site is bounded by residential development to the south and east whilst to the north there is a buffer of a modest area of pasture land before the West Midlands conurbation. The site's northern boundary is also the District boundary between Bromsgrove and Dudley MBC. There is a steady rise in land levels from approximately 120m AOD at the western end of the site to approximately 130m AOD in the east.

### **6.155 Site Assessment**

### **6.156 Site History**

6.157 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **6.158 Green Belt**

6.159 The site is within the designated Green Belt and plays a critical role in maintaining a gap between Hagley and the wider West Midlands Conurbation. Development in this location would erode what is already a modest gap and potentially lead to coalescence with the West Midlands Conurbation.

### **6.160 Flood Risk**

6.161 The site is located entirely within flood zone 1 where there is the lowest risk of flooding.

### **6.162 Visual Appraisal**

6.163 Short distance views into the site are available from Worcester Lane and the North Worcestershire path which dissects the site. The southern half of the site is well screened by planting and the hedgerows which define each of the small areas of pasture. The northern half of the site is more prominent when

viewed from the north. The land does not visually relate to the built form of Hagley and development on this part of the site would be prominent.

#### **6.164 Landscape Sensitivity**

6.165 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity to change. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

#### **6.166 Agricultural Land Quality**

6.167 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there are significant amounts of land across the district where there are some prospects of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **6.168 Historic Environment**

6.169 The site falls within the Sandstone Estate Lands HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, the fact that most of the District falls within the high and medium sensitivity areas means that development in these areas is inevitable. Historic environment that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change if designed properly.

6.170 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

#### **6.171 Green Infrastructure**

6.172 Two public footpaths dissect the site and both of these could be used to provide good pedestrian links into Hagley.



6.173 The majority of the green infrastructure is located on the edge of site boundaries and includes dense hedgerows and a small number of mature trees. Important hedgerows and mature trees should be retained if development occurs.

6.174 Two small traditional orchards are also located within the site. They are a priority habitat with the Worcestershire BAP and should be retained if development occurs.

6.175 There are no water features within the site.

6.176 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site contributes towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. Constraints and opportunities for conservation and promotion should be addressed during the masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design stages. This zone also has medium potential for the presence of historic assets. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **6.177 Sustainability**

6.178 Bus services are available adjacent to the site and Hagley Primary School is within a comfortable walking distance. The site is approximately 1km from the local centre and therefore provides reasonable access to the majority of local services. Whilst the site is relatively sustainable there are concerns over access. The site does not have direct access onto a road and an access would need to be provided onto either Middlefield Lane or Stourbridge Road through the demolition of existing residential properties.

### **6.179 Summary**

6.180 The site is within a relatively sustainable location in Hagley and in physical terms, the site is comparatively unconstrained with the exception of 2 small traditional orchards. However, the site is located within the Green Belt and provides the critical function of preventing coalescence between Hagley and the West Midlands Conurbation. Due to its important Green Belt function it is

not currently considered that the site is suitable to contribute to housing delivery.

#### **6.181 2013 Update**

6.182 Part of the site has been promoted through the SHLAA process via 2 separate submissions as follows:

- North of 41-47 Middlefield Lane (BDC53)
- Land east of Worcester Lane (B4187) and rear of Middlefield Lane (BDC212)

6.183 Neither of these sites are currently considered to be suitable for development due to their Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that both of the sites should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

## **Area 7: Land North of A456 Birmingham Road**

### **6.184 Site Description**

6.185 The site is approximately 18 hectares in size and the land is primarily used for pasture. The site is located to the north of the built up area of Hagley. The site is bounded by residential development to the south and west whilst to the north there is a buffer of a modest area of pasture land before the West Midlands conurbation. The sites northern boundary is also the District boundary between Bromsgrove District and Dudley Metropolitan Borough. There is a sharp rise in land levels from approximately 130m AOD at the western end of the site to approximately 175m AOD in the east. The significant slope across the site may be problematic if the site were to be developed.

### **6.186 Site Assessment**

### **6.187 Site History**

6.188 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **6.189 Green Belt**

6.190 The site is within the designated Green Belt and plays a critical role in maintaining a gap between Hagley and the wider West Midlands Conurbation. Development in this location would erode what is already a modest gap and potentially lead to coalescence with the West Midlands Conurbation.

### **6.191 Flood Risk**

6.192 The site is located entirely within flood zone 1 where there is the lowest risk of flooding.

### **6.193 Visual Appraisal**

6.194 The significant increase in land levels highlights why, in landscape terms, Hagley has not previously expanded northwards in this location.

Development on this site would be highly prominent and tower over the rest of the settlement. Development in this location should therefore be avoided.

#### **6.195 Landscape Sensitivity**

6.196 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

#### **6.197 Agricultural Land Quality**

6.198 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there are significant amounts of land across the District where there are some prospects of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **6.199 Historic Environment Sensitivity**

6.200 The site falls within the Hagley Hall Registered Park and Gardens HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of high sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development would have a significant impact on the historic environment. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

6.201 The site is adjacent a Grade I listed building, Scheduled Ancient Monument and the Grade 1 Historic Park that is part of the Hagley Hall Estate. Any proposed development would need to pay careful attention to the setting of these historic assets.

#### **6.202 Green Infrastructure**

6.203 Two public footpaths are located within and adjacent to the site. The first dissects the southern part of the site whilst the other runs adjacent to the

south western boundary of the site. Both of these could be used to provide good pedestrian links into Hagley and also access into the wider countryside.

6.204 The majority of the green infrastructure is located on the edge of site boundaries and includes dense hedgerows and a small number of mature trees. Important hedgerows and mature trees should be retained if development occurs.

6.205 It should be noted that the site is adjacent to a woodland which forms part of the national inventory of woodland and trees. Woodlands are also a priority habitat within the Worcestershire BAP and therefore the woodland should be protected if any development occurs.

6.206 There are no water features within the site.

6.207 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site contributes towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. Constraints and opportunities for conservation and promotion should be addressed during masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design. This zone has high potential, meaning a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **6.208 Sustainability**

6.209 Bus services are available adjacent to the site on both the Stourbridge and Birmingham Roads, however, the site is over 1.5km from the local centre where the majority of shops and services are located. The train station is also beyond a reasonable walking distance and therefore the site is considered to be the least sustainable around the settlement of Hagley.

### **6.210 Summary**

6.211 The site is poorly located in relation to many of the local shops and facilities within Hagley and is therefore not considered to be sustainable. In addition the site is in the Green Belt and provides the critical function of preventing

coalescence between Hagley and the West Midlands Conurbation. Due to its important Green Belt function, the high sensitivity of the historic environment and poor sustainability credentials it is not considered that the site is currently suitable to contribute to housing delivery.

#### **6.212 2013 Update**

6.213 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

## **Area 8: Land South of Park Road and Hall Lane**

### **6.214 Site Description**

6.215 The site is approximately 18 hectares in size and the land is primarily used for pasture, although a public house, the Lyttleton Arms and a couple of residential properties are included within the boundary. The site is located on the eastern side of Hagley but is located south of Park Road and Hall Lane. The A491 provides the boundary to the west of the site and the Hagley Hall estate is located to the east. The Gallows Brook provides the site boundary to the south. The Bromsgrove Road splits the site into 2 distinct halves creating an eastern and western parcel.

6.216 Land levels rise from approximately 120m AOD in the south west corner of the site to approximately 135m AOD in the north east corner. The significant slope across the site may be problematic if the site were to be developed.

### **6.217 Site Assessment**

### **6.218 Site History**

6.219 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **6.220 Green Belt**

6.221 The site is within the designated Green Belt and plays an important role in maintaining a gap between Hagley and Lower Clent to the south. Development in this location would erode what is already a modest gap and potentially lead to coalescence with the settlement of Lower Clent. Park Road and Hall Lane currently provide a strong Green Belt boundary; the loss of this would lead to encroachment into the wider countryside.

### **6.222 Flood Risk**

6.223 The site is located entirely within flood zone 1 where there is the lowest risk of flooding.

#### **6.224 Visual Appraisal**

6.225 In the eastern half of the site the land levels fall away from the settlement meaning that any new development would not be contained by the landscape and effectively ‘spill-over’ into the wider countryside. By contrast the western half of the site is much more contained and to some extent “sits within a bowl” meaning that views into the site from the south and west are limited. In summary there would be significant visual impact if development occurred east of the Bromsgrove Road but any impact would be significantly reduced if development only occurred west of the Bromsgrove Road.

#### **6.226 Landscape Sensitivity**

6.227 The landscape in this area is a mix of medium and high sensitivity to change, with the highly sensitive landscape located east of the Bromsgrove Road. Development would not usually be supported in areas of high sensitivity and therefore in landscape terms it would be preferable for development to occur west of the Bromsgrove Road. This area of medium sensitivity landscape would be resilient to some change.

#### **6.228 Agricultural Land Quality**

6.229 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there are significant amounts of land across the District where there are some prospects of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **6.230 Historic Environment**

6.231 The site falls within two Historic Environment Character Zones( HECZ). The western half the site falls within the Holy Cross HECZ and the eastern half is located within the Hagley Hall Registered Park and Gardens HECZ. The historic environment of this area is therefore a mix of medium and high sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development would



have a significant impact on the historic environment, particularly on the eastern half of the site. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

6.232 The site contains one listed building, the Old Mill Farmhouse (Grade II) and Hagley Hall (Grade I) is located to the east of the site. The eastern half of the site is also part of a Grade 1 Historic Park forming part of the Hagley Hall Estate. Development would need to retain the setting of these historic assets and therefore large scale development could not occur within the historic park meaning that the net developable area within the site is reduced by approximately 50%.

### **6.233 Green Infrastructure**

6.234 Two public footpaths are located within and adjacent to the site. The first dissects the western half of the site from the north to the south whilst the other runs adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site. Both of these could be used to provide good pedestrian links into Hagley and also access into the wider countryside.

6.235 Individual mature trees are located throughout the eastern half of the site and a dense band of trees are located along the eastern edge of the Bromsgrove Road. The eastern half of the site is covered by a group TPO. Mature hedgerows provide the boundary to the majority of fields within the site. Important hedgerows and mature trees should be retained if development occurs.

6.236 A small traditional orchard is also located within the site. Traditional orchards are a priority habitat with the Worcestershire BAP and should be retained if development occurs.

6.237 The only water feature within the site is the Gallows Brook which provides the southern boundary to the site.

6.238 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site contributes towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. Constraints and opportunities for conservation and promotion should be addressed during the masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design stages. This zone has high potential, meaning a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **6.239 Sustainability**

6.240 Bus services are available adjacent to the site on Hall Lane and Hagley Primary School is also within a comfortable walking distance of the site. However the site is over 1.5km from the local centre where the majority of shops and services are located. The train station is also beyond a reasonable walking distance. It is therefore considered that development in this location could promote the use of the car for short trips and therefore it does not perform as well as other sites in sustainability terms.

### **6.241 Summary**

6.242 The site is poorly located in relation to many of the local shops and facilities within Hagley and is therefore not considered to be sustainable. In addition the site is in the Green Belt and provides an important function of preventing coalescence between Hagley and Lower Clent. Medium to large scale development is likely to have a significant impact on the historic environment, particularly on the eastern half of the site. Due to its important Green Belt function, potential adverse impact on the historic environment and poor sustainability credentials, it is not considered that the site is currently suitable to contribute to housing delivery.

### **6.243 2013 Update**

6.244 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

### **6.245 Overall Conclusions for Hagley**

6.246 In total eight sites were considered around Hagley and have been through the sustainability appraisal process and been assessed against the sustainability objectives. The sustainability appraisal identified that Area 1 performed best due to the close proximity to existing facilities and services, the opportunity to travel by sustainable modes and the limited nature of any environmental constraints. This supports the findings of this assessment and therefore the land at Kidderminster and Stourbridge Road is considered to be the most suitable, of the sites considered, to contribute towards the initial housing target.

### **6.247 2013 Update**

6.248 The site was subsequently included within the DCS2 which went out to consultation between January and April 2011. The following issues were highlighted by residents in relation to the site:

- Roads are unable to cope with traffic
- Schools and doctors surgeries are full to capacity and the police service is overstretched
- Loss of Green Belt
- Brownfield land should be used instead
- Development would lead to increased crime
- Harm to the character of the area
- Loss of community spirit
- Impact on property prices
- Harm to wildlife
- Inconvenience likely to be caused during construction phase
- Hagley would no longer be a village
- A hotel is not needed
- There are existing vacant offices in Hagley

6.249 A response was also received by the site promoter who supported the allocation of land at Kidderminster and Stourbridge Road. They highlight that

the site is suitable for mixed use development including employment, housing and community facilities and is in a sustainable location.

- 6.250 Each individual comment was carefully considered by the Council and detailed responses to these comments have been published on the Council website. It was considered that many of the concerns raised in relation to the site could be addressed either through minor wording changes to policies or through infrastructure contributions. Adverse local publicity during the consultation period resulted in some responses not reflecting the proposals put forward e.g. a hotel was never proposed for the site. On balance it was felt that none of the issues raised were so fundamental that the site should not continue to be proposed through the plan making process.
- 6.251 Following the major changes in national and regional planning which included the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework and the revocation of the RSS on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2013 this site assessment study was reconsidered. Whilst these national changes are fundamental they ultimately do not significantly alter the findings of this study. The NPPF focusses on delivering growth in sustainable manner. The testing of options through this method will help to ensure that the most sustainable outcome is achieved.
- 6.252 Planning applications have been submitted on 3 parcels of area 1. Outline approval was granted on appeal for 38 dwellings for land at Brook Crescent (2010/0378).
- 6.253 An outline and reserved matters planning applications has now been submitted and approved on a significant proportion of the land that is bounded by the Kidderminster and Stourbridge Road (BDC35B). The proposal is for up to 175 dwellings, open space and B1 employment. A number of detailed studies were submitted with the application and these include a Flood Risk Assessment, Air Quality Study, Landscape Appraisal and a Transport Assessment. Construction is expected to begin on site in early 2014.

6.254 A separate outline application (12/0875) for 70 dwellings has also been approved, subject to the signing of a S106 agreement, in relation to the land at Strathearn, Rose and Thicknall Cottage on Western Road.

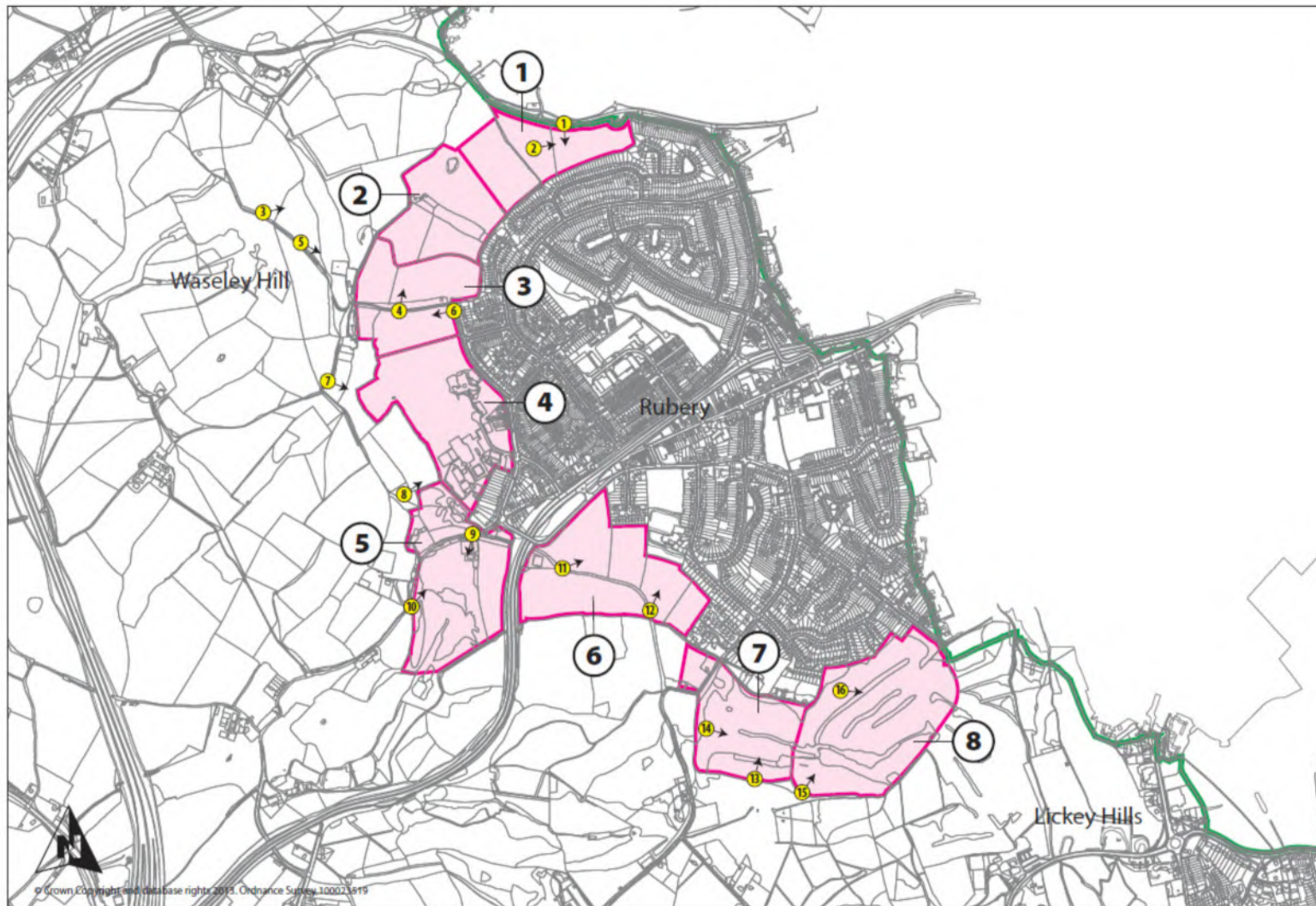
6.255 In light of the above the proposed allocation of land at Kidderminster Road and Stourbridge Road will be included within the Proposed Submission Version of the Bromsgrove District Plan.

## **7. Rubery Assessment**

### **7.1 Introduction**

7.2 The settlement of Rubery is located in the north of Bromsgrove District and adjoins the city of Birmingham which is located to the north east. Rubery contains a wide range of services and facilities including schools, GP surgeries, a leisure centre and the largest retail area outside Bromsgrove Town. There are opportunities to travel by public transport with regular bus services available providing connections to both Birmingham and Bromsgrove.

7.3 8 sites have been identified around the periphery of Rubery and these are considered to represent all of the realistic alternatives for development. These sites are identified on Map 5. Each of these will be assessed to see if they are suitable to contribute to the Council's initial housing target. All sites have been visited as part of the appraisal process and a selection of photos from each site are attached at Appendix 5. All photos were taken from publicly accessible positions and the approximate locations where the photos were taken are shown on Map 5 below.



Map 5: Rubery Areas with photo viewpoints

## **Area 1: Land South of New Inns Lane**

### **7.4 Site Description**

- 7.5 The site is approximately 8.6ha in size and is located to the north of Rubery. The land consists of 3 parcels of land that vary in size. Part of the land is used for football pitches. The site is bounded by New Inns Lane to the north, residential development to the south and east whilst fields are located to the west. There is a steady rise in land levels across the site with levels increasing from 220m AOD in the east to 225m AOD at the western end of the site.

### **7.6 Site Assessment**

### **7.7 Site History**

- 7.8 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **7.9 Green Belt**

- 7.10 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and it is therefore important to consider the Green Belt function of the land. As with any site there is an element of encroachment into the wider countryside however development would be contained on 3 sides by existing residential development. There are concerns that with Rubery forming part of the West Midlands conurbation that any Green Belt release could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area increasing development pressures on the northern edge of Bromsgrove.

### **7.11 Flood Risk**

- 7.12 The site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding.



### **7.13 Visual Appraisal**

- 7.14 There are short distance views available from New Inns Lane and longer distance views of the site are available from the Waseley Hills. Although the longer distance views are set against the back drop of the existing built form of Rubery. Land levels on the site are significantly higher than the existing residential development on Clent Road and therefore on completion development could potentially appear prominent and rather imposing when viewed from Clent Road. Overall some visual harm could be caused by development in this locality.

### **7.15 Landscape Sensitivity**

- 7.16 The landscape in this area is of high sensitivity and is therefore not resilient to change. Development should generally be avoided in areas of high landscape sensitivity.

### **7.17 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 7.18 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **7.19 Historic Environment**

- 7.20 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.
- 7.21 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch Historic Environment Character Zone (HECZ). The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development would have a considerable impact on the historic environment.

It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

## **7.22 Green Infrastructure**

7.23 The site is within close proximity of Gannow Green SWS. This is a mosaic habitat consisting of woodland, scrub and standing open water. The site is of value because of its contiguity with the old grasslands of the Waseley Hills Country Park and the River Rea corridor. It also contains vestiges of damp grassland and marshy flora. Development could potentially have an adverse impact on this nearby SWS.

7.24 Much of the on-site green infrastructure is associated with field boundaries. All 3 fields are bound by hedgerows and some also contain mature trees. Mature trees and important hedgerows would need to be retained if development occurs.

7.25 No public footpaths are located within or adjacent to the site.

7.26 The historic environment does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining sense of place. However, the full potential may be unknown and there is, therefore, scope for further investigations. These should be carried out as part of masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design to identify constraints and opportunities. This zone has high potential, meaning a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

## **7.27 Sustainability**

7.28 The site contains football pitches. The loss of these sports pitches could be detrimental to the health and well being of the local population as there would be reduced access to such these types of facilities in Rubery.

7.28 The site is adjacent to Reaside Junior School and 3 GP surgeries are within 1.1km of the site and these are Frankley Heath Centre, New Road Surgery and Cornhill Surgery. The retail facilities on New Road are approximately

1km from the site and are therefore considered to be just beyond a reasonable walking distance. Whilst there is no train station in Rubery there is still access to good public transport. There are bus stops within 400m with services available every 10 minutes into Birmingham City Centre. Whilst the site has excellent access to public transport the loss of football pitches greatly reduces the sustainability credentials of the site.

## **7.29 Summary**

7.30 Whilst the site has excellent access to public transport the development would result in the loss of sports pitches. In addition there could be significant Green Belt harm if development occurred in this location. There are concerns that with Rubery forming part of the West Midlands conurbation that any Green Belt release could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area increasing development pressures on the northern edge of Bromsgrove. In addition the land is of high landscape sensitivity which is not resilient to change. Overall, it is therefore considered that the site should not contribute to achieving the initial housing target in the district.

## **7.31 2013 Update**

7.32 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

## **Area 2: Land North West of Pinewood Close**

### **7.33 Site Description**

- 7.34 The site is approximately 8ha in size and is located to the north west of Rubery. The land consists of 2 irregular shaped fields. The site is bounded by residential development to the south east with fields located adjacent to all of the other site boundaries. There is a steady rise in land levels across the site with levels increasing from 220m AOD in the south east to 230m AOD at the north western end of the site.

### **7.35 Site Assessment**

### **7.36 Site History**

- 7.37 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **7.38 Green Belt**

- 7.39 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and it is therefore important to consider the Green Belt function of the land. Development of this site could lead to significant encroachment into the wider countryside. There are concerns that with Rubery forming part of the West Midlands conurbation that any Green Belt release could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area increasing development pressures on the northern edge of Bromsgrove. This is particularly pertinent in this instance as there does not appear to be any strong and defensible Green Belt boundary.

### **7.40 Flood Risk**

- 7.41 The site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding.

### **7.42 Visual Appraisal**

- 7.43 The land rises up towards the Waseley Hills and provides an important visual barrier between the built up area of Rubery and the Waseley Hills. There

appears to be no short distance views available into the site with residential development blocking views from the adjacent Pinewood Close and no public rights of way located adjacent to the site. However the site can clearly be seen from the Waseley Hills highlighting the potentially harmful visual impact of development at the foot of a popular country park.

#### **7.44 Landscape Sensitivity**

- 7.45 The landscape in this area is of high sensitivity and is therefore not resilient to change. Development should generally be avoided in areas of high landscape sensitivity.

#### **7.46 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 7.47 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **7.48 Historic Environment**

- 7.49 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development would have a considerable impact on the historic environment. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.
- 7.50 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **7.51 Green Infrastructure**

- 7.52 There is a large grouping of mature trees located in the heart of the site which effectively dissects the site in half. Both fields are bound by hedgerows and some also contain mature trees. Mature trees and important hedgerows would need to be retained if development occurs.
- 7.53 No public footpaths are located within or adjacent to the site.
- 7.54 The historic environment does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining sense of place. However, the full potential may be unknown and there is, therefore, scope for further investigations. These should be carried out as part of masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design to identify constraints and opportunities. This zone has high potential, meaning a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **7.55 Sustainability**

- 7.56 The site is 0.56km from Callow Brook First School and both New Road and Cornhill Surgeries are within 1.2km. The retail facilities on New Road are approximately 1.2km from the site and are therefore beyond a reasonable walking distance. Whilst there is no train station in Rubery there is still access to public transport. There are bus stops within 400m providing hourly services to Bromsgrove and Halesowen. In addition there are bus stops approximately 1km away that have services available every 10 minutes into Birmingham City Centre. Access to regular public transport is not ideal and some services and facilities are beyond a reasonable walking distance. This is not considered to be a particularly sustainable location within Rubery.

### **7.57 Summary**

- 7.58 There is likely to be significant Green Belt harm if development occurred in this location due to significant encroachment into the wider countryside. There are concerns that with Rubery forming part of the West Midlands conurbation that any Green Belt release could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area increasing development pressures on the northern

edge of Bromsgrove. In addition the land is of high landscape sensitivity which is not resilient to change. Overall, it is therefore considered that the site should not contribute to achieving the initial housing target in the district.

**7.59 2013 Update**

7.60 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

### **Area 3: Land Rear of Beeches Closes and Gunner Lane**

#### **7.61 Site Description**

- 7.62 The site is approximately 8.9ha in size and is located to the west of Rubery. The land consists of 4 fields of varying sizes. The site is bounded by residential development to the east with fields located adjacent to all of the other site boundaries. There is a sharp rise in land levels across the site with levels increasing from 220m AOD in the east to 240m AOD at the western end of the site.

#### **7.63 Site Assessment**

#### **7.64 Site History**

- 7.65 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

#### **7.66 Green Belt**

- 7.67 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and it is therefore important to consider the Green Belt function of the land. Development of this site could lead to significant encroachment into the wider countryside. There are concerns that with Rubery forming part of the West Midlands conurbation that any Green Belt release could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area increasing development pressures on the northern edge of Bromsgrove. This is particularly pertinent in this instance as there does not appear to be a strong and defensible Green Belt boundary.

#### **7.68 Flood Risk**

- 7.69 The site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding.

#### **7.70 Visual Appraisal**

- 7.71 The land rises up towards the Waseley Hills and provides an important visual barrier between the built up area of Rubery and the Waseley Hills. There are short distance views available from Gunner Lane and the public right of way



that crosses the site. In addition the site can clearly be seen from the Waseley Hills highlighting the potentially harmful visual impact of development at the foot of a popular country park.

#### **7.72 Landscape Sensitivity**

7.73 The landscape in this area is of high sensitivity and is therefore not resilient to change. Development should generally be avoided in areas of high landscape sensitivity.

#### **7.74 Agricultural Land Quality**

7.75 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **7.76 Historic Environment**

7.77 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development would have a considerable impact on the historic environment. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

7.78 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

#### **7.79 Green Infrastructure**

7.80 The majority of the green infrastructure within the site is associated field boundaries where there are hedgerows and mature trees. Mature trees and important hedgerows would need to be retained if development occurs.

- 7.81 A public footpath is located within the site which provides direct access to Waseley Hills Country Park and therefore could have recreational benefits.
- 7.82 The site is adjacent to the Waseley Hills Country Park SWS. The wildlife site takes in steep-sided coombes of unimproved acidic grassland, interspersed with gorse scrub and small areas of woodland. Development in this location could have a negative impact on this SWS.
- 7.83 The historic environment does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining sense of place. However, the full potential may be unknown and there is, therefore, scope for further investigations. These should be carried out as part of masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design to identify constraints and opportunities. This zone has high potential, meaning a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

#### **7.84 Sustainability**

- 7.85 The site is within 0.2km of Holywell Primary School and both New Road and Cornhill Surgeries are approximately 0.6km from the site. The retail facilities on New Road are approximately 0.6km from the site and are therefore considered to be within a reasonable walking distance. Whilst there is no train station in Rubery there is still access to public transport. There are bus stops within 400m that provide hourly services to Bromsgrove and Halesowen. In addition there are bus stops approximately 1.2km away that have services available every 10 minutes into Birmingham City Centre. Whilst access to regular public transport is not ideal there is a good range of facilities within 0.6km and therefore this is considered to be a sustainable location within Rubery.

#### **7.86 Summary**

- 7.87 Whilst the site is considered to be within a reasonable walking distance of a range of local facilities there could be significant Green Belt harm if development occurred in this location due to significant encroachment into the

wider countryside. There are concerns that with Rubery forming part of the West Midlands conurbation that any Green Belt release could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area increasing development pressures on the northern edge of Bromsgrove. In addition the land is of high landscape sensitivity which is not resilient to change and a SWS is directly adjacent to the site. Overall, it is therefore considered that the site should not contribute to achieving the initial housing target in the district.

#### **7.88 Update 2013**

- 7.89 Part of the site has been promoted through the SHLAA process (BDC78). The site promoted under reference BDC78 includes only one large field at the southern end of the site. The site is not currently considered to be suitable for development due to its Green Belt designation.

## **Area 4: Land west of Gunner Lane**

### **7.90 Site Description**

- 7.91 The site is approximately 12.5ha in size and is located to the west of Rubery. The land consists of both Holywell Primary and Waseley High Schools and their associated playing fields. The site is bounded by residential development to the east with fields located adjacent to all of the other site boundaries. There is a steady rise in land levels across the site with levels increasing from 220m AOD in the east to 230m AOD at the western end of the site.

### **7.92 Site Assessment**

### **7.93 Site History**

- 7.94 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **7.95 Green Belt**

- 7.96 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and it is therefore important to consider the Green Belt function of the land. Development of this site could lead to significant encroachment into the wider countryside. There are concerns that with Rubery forming part of the West Midlands conurbation that any Green Belt release could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area increasing development pressures on the northern edge of Bromsgrove. This is particularly pertinent in this instance as there does not appear to be a strong and defensible Green Belt boundary. Whilst the development would not actually reduce the gap beyond the existing narrowest point between the conurbation and Catshill to the south it is still a fundamental issue that the quantum of open land between the settlements would be reduced.

### **7.97 Flood Risk**

- 7.98 The site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding.

## **7.99 Visual Appraisal**

7.100 The land rises up towards the Waseley Hills and provides an important visual barrier between the built up area of Rubery and the Waseley Hills. There are short distance views available from Gunner Lane. In addition the site can clearly be seen from the Waseley Hills and the public footpath west of the site highlighting the potentially prominent nature of any development.

## **7.101 Landscape Sensitivity**

7.102 The landscape in this area is of high sensitivity and is therefore not resilient to change. Development should generally be avoided in areas of high landscape sensitivity.

## **7.103 Agricultural Land Quality**

7.104 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

## **7.105 Historic Environment**

7.106 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development would have a considerable impact on the historic environment. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

7.107 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **7.108 Green Infrastructure**

7.109 There are groupings of mature trees in the central and southern sections of the site. Hedgerows also provide the boundary treatment to the site in most places. Mature trees and important hedgerows would need to be retained if development occurs.

7.110 Whilst there are no protected habitats within the site there are 3 notable areas near to the site. The site is in close proximity to the Waseley Hills Country Park SWS. This wildlife site takes in steep-sided coombes of unimproved acidic grassland, interspersed with gorse scrub and small areas of woodland. There is also an area of woodland that forms part of the national inventory of woodland and trees is located to the west of the site. Woodland is identified as a priority habitat within the Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). A further SWS is located to the south of the site. This is known as Broadmoor Wood and Chadwich Manor Ponds. This is a complex mix of woodland, marshy grassland and ponds along the stream valley of a tributary of the Battlefield Brook. Much of Broadmoor Wood itself is Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland. Development in this location could have a negative impact on the nearby SWS's and areas of woodland.

7.111 A public footpath is located close to the rear of the site which provides direct access to Waseley Hills Country Park and therefore could have recreational benefits for residents.

7.112 The historic environment does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining sense of place. However, the full potential may be unknown and there is, therefore, scope for further investigations. These should be carried out as part of masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design to identify constraints and opportunities. This zone has high potential, meaning a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **7.113 Sustainability**

7.114 The site contains both Holywell Primary and Waseley Hills High School providing excellent access to educational establishments however development would lead to the loss of the playfields associated with the schools. The loss of such crucial sports facilities would have hugely detrimental effects on existing and future pupils of the schools.

7.115 Both New Road and Cornhill Surgeries are approximately 0.5km from the site. The retail facilities on New Road are also approximately 0.5km from the site and are therefore considered to be within a reasonable walking distance. Whilst there is no train station in Rubery there is still access to public transport. There are bus stops within 400m however these provide only hourly services to Bromsgrove and Halesowen. However there are bus stops approximately 1.1km away that have services available every 10 minutes into Birmingham City Centre. Whilst access to regular public transport is not ideal there is a good range of facilities within 0.5km and therefore this is considered to be a sustainable location within Rubery.

### **7.116 Summary**

7.117 Whilst the site is considered to be within a reasonable walking distance of a range of local facilities the loss of school playfields would have a significant harmful impact on school pupils. In addition there may be significant Green Belt harm if development occurred in this location due to encroachment into the wider countryside and the possible reduction of the Green Belt gap between Catshill and Rubery. There are concerns that with Rubery forming part of the West Midlands conurbation that any Green Belt release could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area increasing development pressures on the northern edge of Bromsgrove. The land is also of high landscape sensitivity which is not resilient to change and 2 SWS's are located near to the site. Overall, it is therefore considered that the site should not contribute to achieving the initial housing target in the district.

**7.118 2013 Update**

7.119 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.



## **Area 5: Land Adjacent Holywell Lane**

### **7.120 Site Description**

7.121 The site is approximately 12.6ha in size and is located to the south west of Rubery. The land consists of fields of varying shapes and sizes, woodland and Rubery Community and Leisure Centre. The site is bounded by residential development to the north, the A38 to the east, with fields located adjacent to both the south and west. There is a steady rise in land levels across the site with levels increasing from 220m AOD in the south to 230m AOD at the northern end of the site.

### **7.122 Site Assessment**

### **7.123 Site History**

7.124 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **7.125 Green Belt**

7.126 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and it is therefore important to consider the Green Belt function of the land. Development of this site could lead to significant encroachment into the wider countryside. There are concerns that with Rubery forming part of the West Midlands conurbation that any Green Belt release could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area increasing development pressures on the northern edge of Bromsgrove. This is particularly pertinent in this instance as there does not appear to be a strong and defensible Green Belt boundary. Development in this particular location would reduce the gap between the conurbation and Catshill.

### **7.127 Flood Risk**

7.128 The site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding.

### **7.129 Visual Appraisal**

7.130 The site is bounded a number of mature trees limiting views into the site although short distance views are available along parts of Holywell Lane. It is therefore considered that development in this locality would not appear unduly prominent.

### **7.131 Landscape Sensitivity**

7.132 The landscape in this area is of high sensitivity and is therefore not resilient to change. Development should generally be avoided in areas of high landscape sensitivity.

### **7.133 Agricultural Land Quality**

7.134 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a high prospect (greater than 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **7.135 Historic Environment**

7.136 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development would have a considerable impact on the historic environment. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

7.137 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **7.138 Green Infrastructure**

7.139 Areas of woodland are located throughout the site. Hedgerows provide the boundary treatment to fields within the site. Woodland and important hedgerows would need to be retained if development occurs.

7.140 A public footpath is located within the northern part of the site and further one is located adjacent to the southern boundary. These could provide access to wider countryside and Waseley Hills Country Park which could provide recreational benefits for residents.

7.141 A SWS is located within the site and covers almost half of the site. This is known as Broadmoor Wood and Chadwich Manor Ponds. This is a complex mix of woodland, marshy grassland and ponds along the stream valley of a tributary of the Battlefield Brook. Much of Broadmoor Wood itself is Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland. A SWS is also located adjacent to the east edge of the site. This is known as Beaconwood and Chadwich Wood. Part of the site is Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland. Woodland is identified as a priority habitat within the Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). Development in this location could have a negative impact on the SWS's and areas of woodland.

7.142 The historic environment does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining sense of place. However, the full potential may be unknown and there is, therefore, scope for further investigations. These should be carried out as part of masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design to identify constraints and opportunities. This zone has high potential, meaning a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **7.143 Sustainability**

7.144 The site contains Rubery Community and Leisure Centre. The loss of this popular local facility reduces access to sports and recreational facilities for residents. This could be detrimental to their health and well-being. Both New Road and Cornhill Surgeries are approximately 0.75km from the site and

Holywell Primary School is within 0.5km. The retail facilities on New Road are also approximately 0.75km from the site and are therefore considered to be within a reasonable walking distance. Whilst there is no train station in Rubery there is still access to public transport. There are bus stops within 400m these provide hourly services to Bromsgrove and Halesowen and half hourly to Birmingham City Centre. In terms of access to local services this considered to be a sustainable location in Rubery however the loss of Rubery Community and Leisure Centre weighs heavily against this site.

### **7.145 Summary**

7.146 Whilst the site is considered to be within a reasonable walking distance of a range of local facilities the loss of Rubery Community and leisure centre would greatly reduce access to sports and recreational facilities. In addition there could be significant Green Belt harm if development occurred in this location due to significant encroachment into the wider countryside and the reduction of the Green Belt gap between Catshill and Rubery. There are concerns that with Rubery forming part of the West Midlands conurbation that any Green Belt release could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area increasing development pressures on the northern edge of Bromsgrove. The land is also of high landscape sensitivity which is not resilient to change and a SWS covers almost half of the site. Overall, it is therefore considered that the site should not contribute to achieving the initial housing target in the district.

### **7.147 2013 Update**

7.148 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

## **Area 6: Land South of Birch Road**

### **7.149 Site Description**

7.150 The site is approximately 13.7ha in size and is located to the south of Rubery.

The land consists of 9 fields of varying shapes and sizes. The site is bounded by residential development and Beaconside School to the north, residential development to the east, the A38 to the west and fields located adjacent to the southern boundary. There is a steady rise in land levels across the site with levels increasing from 225m AOD in the north to 240m AOD at the southern end of the site.

### **7.151 Site Assessment**

### **7.152 Site History**

7.153 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **7.154 Green Belt**

7.155 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and it is therefore important to consider the Green Belt function of the land. Development of this site would lead to encroachment into the wider countryside. There are concerns that with Rubery forming part of the West Midlands conurbation that any Green Belt release could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area increasing development pressures on the northern edge of Bromsgrove. This is particularly pertinent in this instance as there would not appear to be a strong and defensible Green Belt boundary. Development in this particular location would reduce the gap between the conurbation and Catshill.

### **7.156 Flood Risk**

7.157 The site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding.

### **7.158 Visual Appraisal**

7.159 There is a significant change in land levels with levels rising above the existing housing development on Birch Road and Hazel Road. Development on this rising land would potentially be visible above existing dwellings when viewed from Birch Road and Hazel Road. Short distance views are also available from the public footpath that dissects the site. Overall there is likely to be some visual harm if development occurred in this location.

### **7.160 Landscape Sensitivity**

7.161 The landscape in this area is of high sensitivity and is therefore not resilient to change. Development should generally be avoided in areas of high landscape sensitivity.

### **7.162 Agricultural Land Quality**

7.163 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a reasonable prospect (20.1 – 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **7.164 Historic Environment**

7.165 The site falls within the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of medium sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development would have a considerable impact on the historic environment. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

7.166 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **7.167 Green Infrastructure**

7.168 The majority of green infrastructure is associated with field boundaries where there are dense hedgerows and some mature trees. Mature trees and important hedgerows would need to be retained if development occurs.

7.169 Two public footpaths are located within the northern part of the site. These could increase access to the wider countryside which could provide recreational benefits for residents.

7.170 No SWS's are located within the site however 3 are located near to the site. Broadmoor Wood and Chadwich Manor Ponds SWS is located west of the site. This is a complex mix of woodland, marshy grassland and ponds along the stream valley of a tributary of the Battlefield Brook. Much of Broadmoor Wood itself is Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland. Beaconwood and Chadwich Wood are located south of the site. Part of the site is Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland. Woodland is identified as a priority habitat within the Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). Whetty Coppice SWS is located to the north of the site. This is Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland. Development in this location could have a negative impact on the SWS's.

7.171 The historic environment does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining sense of place. However, the full potential may be unknown and there is, therefore, scope for further investigations. These should be carried out as part of masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design to identify constraints and opportunities. This zone has high potential, meaning a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **7.172 Sustainability**

7.173 The site is adjacent to Beaconside School and both New Road and Cornhill Surgeries are approximately 0.2km from the site. The retail facilities on New Road are also approximately 0.2km from the site and are therefore considered to be within an easy walking distance. Whilst there is no train station in Rubery there is still access to public transport. There is a bus stop adjacent

that provides half hourly services to Birmingham City Centre. This is considered to be a sustainable location in Rubery.

#### **7.174 Conclusion**

7.175 Whilst the site is considered to be within a short walking distance of a range of local facilities there could be significant Green Belt harm if development occurred in this location due to significant encroachment into the wider countryside and the reduction of the Green Belt gap between Catshill and Rubery. There are concerns that with Rubery forming part of the West Midlands conurbation that any Green Belt release could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area increasing development pressures on the northern edge of Bromsgrove. The land is also of high landscape sensitivity which is not resilient to change and 3 SWS's are located near to the site. Overall, it is therefore considered that the site should not contribute to achieving the initial housing target in the district.



## **Area 7: Land Adjacent to Beacon Hill**

### **7.176 Site Description**

7.177 The site is approximately 14.4ha in size and is located to the south of Rubery. The land consists of small fields, a limited number of residential properties and part of the Lickey Hills Golf Course. The site is bounded by residential development to the north, woodland to the west, the Lickey Hills Golf Course to the east and fields are located adjacent to the southern boundary. There is a steady rise in land levels across the site with levels increasing from 235m AOD in the north to 250m AOD at the southern end of the site.

### **7.178 Site Assessment**

### **7.179 Site History**

7.180 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **7.181 Green Belt**

7.182 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and it is therefore important to consider the Green Belt function of the land. Development of this site would lead to significant encroachment into the wider countryside. There are concerns that with Rubery forming part of the West Midlands conurbation that any Green Belt release could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area increasing development pressures on the northern edge of Bromsgrove. Development in this particular location could reduce the gap between the conurbation and both Catshill and Barnt Green.

### **7.183 Flood Risk**

7.184 The site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding.

### **7.185 Visual Appraisal**

7.186 The land rises up towards the Lickey Hills and provides an important visual barrier between the built up area of Rubery and the Lickey Hills. There are

short distance views available from Beacon Hill and the public right of way that crosses the site. In addition the site can clearly be seen from the Lickey Hills highlighting the harmful visual impact of development at the foot of a popular country park.

#### **7.187 Landscape Sensitivity**

7.188 The landscape in this area is of high sensitivity and is therefore not resilient to change. Development should generally be avoided in areas of high landscape sensitivity.

#### **7.189 Agricultural Land Quality**

7.190 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a reasonable prospect (20.1 – 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **7.191 Historic Environment**

7.192 The site falls within both the Lickey and Blackwell, Barnt Green and Alvechurch HECZ and the Black Country Urban Area HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is a mix of low and medium sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development would have a considerable impact on the historic environment on the southern half of the site. It is preferable for development to occur on the northern part of the site which is of low sensitivity where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

7.193 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

#### **7.194 Green Infrastructure**

7.195 There are groupings of mature trees at the northern end of the site and hedgerows associated with the fields within the site. There are also trees that form part of the landscaping of the golf course. Mature trees and important hedgerows would need to be retained if development occurs.

7.196 Public footpaths are located adjacent to both the western and southern boundaries of the site and a further footpath is located in the northern part of the site. These could provide access to the wider countryside which could provide recreational benefits for residents.

7.197 No SWS's are located within the site however the site is adjacent to 2 SWS's and 2 further areas of woodland that form part of the National Inventory of Woodland and Trees. Beaconwood and Chadwich Wood are located south west of the site. Part of the site is Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland. Woodland is identified as a priority habitat within the Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). Beacon Hill SWS is located adjacent to the southern boundary of the site. The SWS includes acid grassland and scrub. Development in this location could have a negative impact on the SWS's and areas of woodland.

7.198 The historic environment does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining sense of place. However, the full potential may be unknown and there is, therefore, scope for further investigations. These should be carried out as part of masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design to identify constraints and opportunities. The southern part of the site has high potential, meaning a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

#### **7.199 Sustainability**

7.200 Part of the site is located on the Lickey Hills Golf Course. This is a popular local sports and recreation facility and the loss of the facility would not only reduce the access of residents to golf courses but could also have a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of residents.

7.201 Both New Road and Cornhill Surgeries are approximately 0.75km from the site and Beaconside Primary School is within 0.5km. The retail facilities on New Road are also approximately 0.75km from the site and are therefore considered to be within a reasonable walking distance. Whilst there is no train station in Rubery there is still access to public transport. There is a bus stop within 400m that has an hourly service and a further bus stop within 800m that provides half hourly services to Birmingham City Centre. In terms of access to many local facilities this is considered to be a sustainable location in Rubery however the loss of the golf course weighs heavily against the site.

#### **7.202 Summary**

7.203 Whilst the site is considered to be within a reasonable walking distance of a range of local facilities the loss of the Lickey Hills Golf Course would greatly reduce access to such facilities. There could also be significant Green Belt harm if development occurred in this location due to encroachment into the wider countryside and the potential reduction of Green Belt land between the conurbation and both Catshill and Barnt Green. There are concerns that with Rubery forming part of the West Midlands conurbation that any Green Belt release could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area increasing development pressures on the northern edge of Bromsgrove. The land is also of high landscape sensitivity which is not resilient to change and 2 SWS's are located near to the site. Overall, it is therefore considered that the site should not contribute to achieving the initial housing target in the district.

#### **7.204 2013 Update**

7.205 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

## **Area 8: Land Rear of Links and Bilberry Drive**

### **7.206 Site Description**

7.206 The site is approximately 16.5ha in size and is located to the south of Rubery. The land forms part of the Lickey Hills Golf Course. The site is bounded by residential development to the north, the Lickey Hills Golf Course to the west and the Lickey Hills Country Park to the south and east. There is a sharp rise in land levels across the site with levels increasing from 225m AOD in the north eastern corner to 250m AOD at the south western end of the site.

### **7.207 Site Assessment**

### **7.208 Site History**

7.209 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **7.210 Green Belt**

7.211 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and it is therefore important to consider the Green Belt function of the land. Development of this site could lead to significant encroachment into the wider countryside. There are concerns that with Rubery forming part of the West Midlands conurbation that any Green Belt release could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area increasing development pressures on the northern edge of Bromsgrove. Development in this particular location may reduce the gap between the conurbation and both Barnt Green and Cofton Hackett.

### **7.212 Flood Risk**

7.213 The site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding.

### **7.214 Visual Appraisal**

7.215 The land rises up towards the Lickey Hills and provides an important visual barrier between the built up area of Rubery and the Lickey Hills. There are short distance views into the site are limited from the adjacent residential

areas due to the number of trees on the periphery of the golf course. However, the site can clearly be seen from the Lickey Hills highlighting the harmful visual impact of development at the foot of a popular country park.

#### **7.216 Landscape Sensitivity**

7.217 The landscape in this area is of high sensitivity and is therefore not resilient to change. Development should generally be avoided in areas of high landscape sensitivity.

#### **7.218 Agricultural Land Quality**

7.219 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a reasonable prospect (20.1 – 60%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **7.220 Historic Environment**

7.221 The site falls within the Black Country Urban Area HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of low sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development could be accommodated although specific assets may suffer adverse effects. Such areas are considered most appropriate for development from a historic environment perspective.

7.222 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

#### **7.223 Green Infrastructure**

7.224 Green infrastructure is limited to trees that are located throughout the golf course. Mature trees would need to be retained if development occurs.

- 7.225 A Public footpath is located adjacent southern boundary of the site. This could provide access to the wider countryside and the Lickey Hills Country Park which could provide recreational benefits for residents.
- 7.226 No SWS's are located within the site however the site is adjacent to 2 SWS's and an area of woodland that form part of the National Inventory of Woodland and Trees. Beacon Hill SWS is located adjacent to the south western corner of the site. The SWS includes acid grassland and scrub. The Lickey Hills SWS is located to the east of the site. The site includes Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and unimproved low-land grassland. Development in this location could have a negative impact on the SWS's and area of woodland.
- 7.227 The historic environment does not appear to contribute strongly towards defining sense of place. However, the full potential may be unknown and there is, therefore, scope for further investigations. These should be carried out as part of masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design to identify constraints and opportunities. This zone has low potential, meaning that there are unlikely to be any high quality assets although an archaeological survey would be required to confirm this.

#### **7.228 Sustainability**

- 7.229 The whole site forms part of the Lickey Hills Golf Course. The is a popular local sports and recreation facility and the loss of the facility would not only reduce the access of residents to golf courses but could also have a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of residents.
- 7.230 Leach Heath Medical Centre and Reabrook Surgery are both within 0.8km of the site and Beaconside Primary and St. James's Catholic Primary School are within 0.7km. The retail facilities on New Road are approximately 0.85km from the site and are therefore considered to be just within a reasonable walking distance. Whilst there is no train station in Rubery there is still access to public transport. There is a bus stop adjacent to the site that has an hourly service. Further bus stops are located on Leach Green Lane within 600m that provides services every 20 minutes to Birmingham City Centre and hourly

services to Bromsgrove Town Centre. In terms of access to many local facilities this is considered to be a sustainable location in Rubery however the loss of the golf course weighs heavily against the site.

### **7.231 Summary**

7.232 Whilst the site is considered to be within a reasonable walking distance of a range of local facilities the loss of the Lickey Hills Golf Course would greatly reduce access to such facilities. There could also be significant Green Belt harm if development occurred in this location due to encroachment into the wider countryside and the likely reduction of Green Belt land between the conurbation and both Cofton Hackett and Barnt Green. There are concerns that with Rubery forming part of the West Midlands conurbation that any Green Belt release could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area increasing development pressures on the northern edge of Bromsgrove. The land is also of high landscape sensitivity which is not resilient to change and 2 SWS's are located near to the site. Overall, it is therefore considered that the site should not contribute to achieving the initial housing target in the district.

### **7.233 2013 Update**

7.234 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.



### **7.235 Overall Conclusions for Rubery**

7.236 In total 8 sites have been considered around the western and southern edges of Rubery. In conclusion none of the 8 sites are considered suitable to contribute towards the delivery of the initial housing target in the district. A number of constraints have been identified around the edge of Rubery including the loss of sports and recreational facilities and the presence of a number of SWS's. However the most fundamental issue is the Green Belt function of the land. The land around the periphery of Rubery plays a critical role in preventing urban sprawl and preventing convergence with settlements such as Catshill and Barnt Green.

7.237 An SA has been completed alongside this site assessment document which assesses each site against the SA objectives. Areas 2 and 6 performed well due to the close proximity to existing facilities and services, the opportunity to travel by sustainable modes and the limited nature of any environmental constraints. However, it is important to note that a strong performance against SA objectives does not necessarily mean that a site is suitable for development. For example, poor performance against a single indicator may not unduly affect the overall SA performance but this single issue in planning terms may be sufficient for a site to be considered unsuitable for development. In this instance sites 2 and 6 are located in the Green Belt and appear to have a fundamental role in preventing encroachment into the wider countryside and stopping the unrestricted sprawl of the West Midlands Conurbation. Development in these localities could also reduce the gap between the conurbation and several settlements within Bromsgrove District. It is therefore considered that there are currently no appropriate sites for development on the edge of Rubery.

### **7.238 2013 Update**

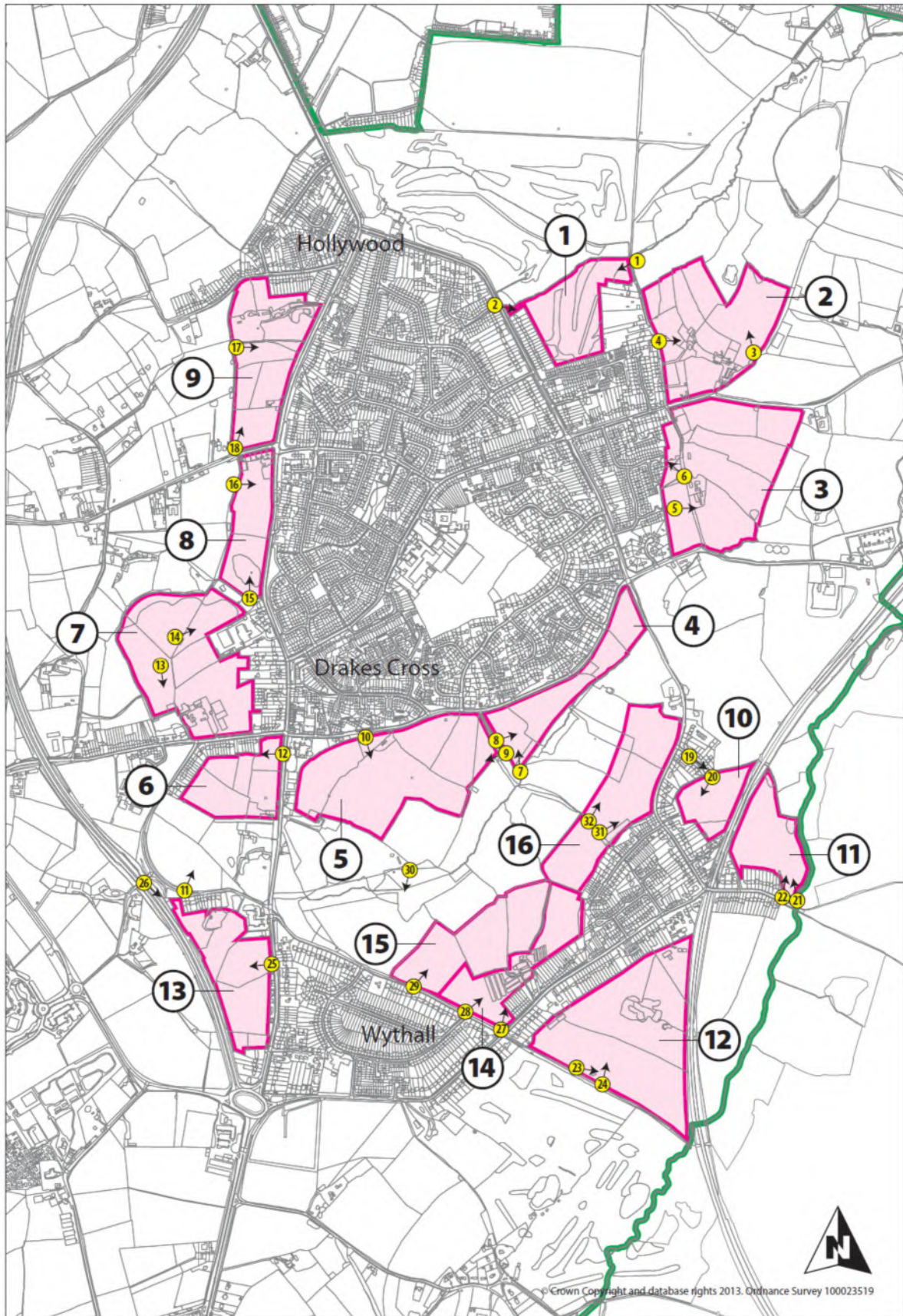
7.239 No sites in Rubery were subsequently included within the DCS2 which went out to consultation between January and April 2011. There were no objections received in relation to this issue.

7.240 Following the major changes in national and regional planning which included the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework and the revocation of the RSS on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2013 this site assessment study was reconsidered. Whilst these national changes are fundamental they ultimately do not significantly alter the findings of this study. The NPPF focusses on delivering growth in sustainable manner. The testing of options through this method will help to ensure that the most sustainable outcome is achieved. In light of the above no sites in Rubery will be included within the Proposed Submission version of the Bromsgrove District Plan.

## **8. Wythall**

### **8.1 Introduction**

- 8.2 The settlement of Wythall is located in the north east of Bromsgrove District and includes two areas of built form; Hollywood and Drakes Cross to north and Grimes Hill to the south. Wythall as a whole, contains a wide range of services and facilities including schools, local retail and a leisure centre. There are opportunities to travel by public transport with a local railway station that has an hourly service to Birmingham and also bus services are available.
- 8.3 An initial scoping highlighted that a particular area around Wythall should be discounted due to its fundamental role in preventing coalescence between settlements. On this basis the land north of Hollywood will not be considered further to protect the narrow gap between Hollywood and the West Midlands conurbation.
- 8.4 16 sites have been identified around the periphery of Wythall and these are considered to represent all of the realistic alternatives for development. These sites are identified on Map 6. Each of these will be assessed to see if they are suitable to contribute to the Council's initial housing target. All sites have been visited as part of the appraisal process and a selection of photos from each site are attached at Appendix 6. All photos were taken from publicly accessible positions and the approximate locations where the photos were taken are shown on Map 6 below.



Map 6: Wythall Areas with photo viewpoints

## **Area 1: Land North of Windrush Road**

### **8.5 Site Description**

- 8.6 The site is approximately 6ha in size and is located to the north of Hollywood. The land forms part of Gay Hill golf course. The site is bounded by Windrush Road to the south, The Fordrough to the east, Hollywood Lane to the east and a watercourse to the north. There is a modest change in land levels across the site with levels decreasing from 150m AOD in the south to 145m AOD at the northern end of the site.

### **8.7 Site Assessment**

### **8.8 Site History**

- 8.9 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **8.10 Green Belt**

- 8.11 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and it is therefore important to consider the Green Belt function of the land. As with any site there is an element of encroachment into the wider countryside. The site is located close to the West Midlands conurbation. Whilst the development would not actually reduce the gap beyond the existing narrowest point between Hollywood and Birmingham it is still a key issue that the quantum of open land between the settlements could be reduced. It should be noted that the gap in this location between the settlements is already particularly narrow and it is therefore considered that development in this location could lead to coalescence and the merging of settlements in the future.

### **8.12 Flood Risk**

- 8.13 The vast majority of the site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding. However a small parcel of land within the north east corner does fall within flood zones 2 and 3 where there is a greater risk of flooding. This matter could be considered further in a site specific flood risk assessment. As the area at risk of flooding is small in comparison to the

whole site area, it is not considered to be a fundamental issue affecting the overall suitability of the site.

#### **8.14 Visual Appraisal**

- 8.15 Views into the site are severely restricted due to the residential development that exists around the southern, eastern and western edges of the site. Trees and hedgerows are also located around the periphery of the golf course. The site is relatively flat and development would not appear unduly prominent from any public locations.

#### **8.16 Landscape Sensitivity**

- 8.17 The landscape in this area is of low sensitivity and is therefore resilient to change. It is preferable that development occurs in low sensitivity areas such as this.

#### **8.18 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 8.19 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **8.20 Historic Environment**

- 8.21 The site falls within the Heaths HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of high sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development would have a significant impact on the historic environment. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.
- 8.22 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **8.23 Green Infrastructure**

- 8.24 There are a number of trees located throughout the site in small clusters that add amenity value to the golf course. Hedgerows provide defined boundaries on the east and west edges of the site. Mature trees and important hedgerows would need to be retained if development occurs.
- 8.25 The only watercourse in the site is the stream that runs along the northern boundary of the site.
- 8.26 No public footpaths are located within the site however one does lie adjacent to the north east corner of the site. This public footpath could provide links into the wider countryside and also local facilities in Wythall.
- 8.27 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site contributes towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. Constraints and opportunities for conservation and promotion should be addressed during masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design. This zone has high potential, meaning a range of high quality assets probably survive. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **8.28 Sustainability**

- 8.29 The site is within walking distance of local facilities in Wythall including retail at May Lane, a doctors surgery and a primary school. Public transport is a viable option with a bus stop within 400m and Whitlocks End Train Station within 1.4km where a large car park is available. This provides good access to Birmingham via a sustainable mode of transport. This is considered to be a sustainable location within Wythall.
- 8.30 Development in this location would lead to the loss of part of Gay Hill Golf Course which is an important sport and recreation facility. The loss of such facilities should be resisted.

### **8.31 Summary**

- 8.32 The site has a low probability of high quality agricultural land being present and is of low landscape sensitivity. Whilst these factors weigh in favour of development in this location the site performs a critical Green Belt function in preventing coalescence between Birmingham and Hollywood. Whilst the site has good access to many local facilities development would lead to the loss of the Gay Hill Golf Course which is an important sport and recreation facility for residents. Overall, it is therefore considered that the site should not contribute to the delivery of the initial housing target in the district.

### **8.33 2013 Update**

- 8.34 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.



## **Area 2: Land North of Truemans Heath Lane**

### **8.35 Site Description**

8.36 The site is approximately 10.9ha in size and is located east of Hollywood. The site is bounded to the west by The Fordrough and to the south by Truemans Heath Lane. The site consists of a number of fields of varying shapes and sizes and is used for agricultural purposes. There is a steady rise in land levels from approximately 140m AOD at the southern end of the site to approximately 150m AOD in the north.

### **8.37 Site Assessment**

### **8.38 Site History**

8.39 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **8.40 Green Belt**

8.41 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and therefore it is important to consider the Green Belt function of the site. As with all sites there is an element of encroachment into the countryside. Development in this location increases the potential for coalescence with both Majors Green and the West Midlands conurbation. The land in question therefore performs the critical role of preventing settlements from merging.

### **8.42 Flood Risk**

8.43 There are no areas of flooding within the site however a watercourse flows to the north of the site and has an area of flood risk associated with it. This falls within flood zone 2 and is located adjacent to the site.

### **8.44 Visual Appraisal**

8.45 The site is generally quite open with short distance views available into the site from the adjacent public footpath and The Fordrough. With land levels rising towards the northern end of the site there are concerns that

development in this particular area would appear unduly prominent when viewed from Truemans Heath Lane.

#### **8.46 Landscape Sensitivity**

- 8.47 The landscape in this area is a mix of medium and high sensitivity. Landscape that is of high sensitivity is not resilient to change and therefore development should generally be avoided.

#### **8.48 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 8.49 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **8.50 Historic Environment**

- 8.51 The site falls within the Heaths HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of high sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development would have a significant impact on the historic environment. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.
- 8.52 The site contains Trueman's Heath Farmhouse which is a grade II listed building. Development could therefore have a negative impact on the setting of this historic asset.

#### **8.53 Green Infrastructure**

- 8.54 There a number of hedgerows throughout the site that provides the boundary treatment to each of the fields within the area. A number of mature trees are also located within the site; these are primarily located within hedgerows and

on the edge of the site. Any development would need to be carefully planned to retain mature trees and important hedgerows.

8.55 The site is bounded by public footpaths to the east and west. This could help to improve access to facilities in both Wythall and the conurbation whilst also providing recreational benefits.

8.56 Approximately one third of the site consists of Berry Mound Pastures SSSI. The special interest in the site lies in the diversity of the semi-natural grassland sward. Development on or near the SSSI could have severe consequences for the SSSI.

8.57 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site contributes towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. Constraints and opportunities for conservation and promotion should be addressed during masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design. This zone has high potential, meaning a range of high quality assets probably survive. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

## **8.58 Sustainability**

8.59 The site is within walking distance of local facilities in Wythall including retail, a doctors surgery and a primary school. Public transport is a viable option with a bus stop nearby and Whitlocks End Train Station within 1.2km where a large car park is available. This will provide good access to Birmingham via a sustainable mode of transport. This is considered to be a sustainable location within Wythall.

## **8.60 Summary**

8.61 The site is in a sustainable location with good access to public transport and local facilities however the site appears to have a crucial Green Belt function in retaining a gap between Wythall and both Majors Green and the conurbation. In addition approximately one third of the site is covered by a SSSI and part of the site is considered to be of high landscape sensitivity. The combination of these factors highlights that the site is not currently

suitable to contribute towards the delivery of the initial housing target within the district.

**8.62 2013 Update**

- 8.63 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

### **Area 3: Land South of Truemans Heath Lane**

#### **8.64 Site Description**

- 8.65 The site is approximately 14.7ha in size and is located east of Drakes Cross. The site is bounded to the west by residential development, Truemans Heath Lane to the north and Houndsfield Lane to the south. Fields provide the boundary to the eastern edge of the site. The site consists of a number of fields of varying shapes and sizes and is used for agricultural purposes. There is a steady rise in land levels from approximately 140m AOD at the southern end of the site to approximately 150m AOD in the north.

#### **8.66 Site Assessment**

#### **8.67 Site History**

- 8.68 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

#### **8.69 Green Belt**

- 8.70 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and therefore it is important to consider the Green Belt function of the site. As with all sites there is an element of encroachment into the countryside. Development in this location could increase the potential for coalescence with Majors Green. The land in question therefore appears to perform the critical role of preventing settlements from merging.

#### **8.71 Flood Risk**

- 8.72 There are no areas of flooding within the site however a watercourse flows near to the south east corner of the site and has an area of flood risk associated with it. This falls within flood zone 2 and is located adjacent to the site.

#### **8.73 Visual Appraisal**

- 8.74 Short distance views are available into the site from the public footpath running through the site, Truemans Heath Lane and Houndsfield Lane. Some

of the small parcels of land on the western edge of the site are flat and relate well to the adjacent built form. However, further east land levels rise and development would appear prominent when viewed from various parts of Houndsfield Lane and Truemans Heath Lane.

#### **8.75 Landscape Sensitivity**

- 8.76 The landscape in this area is a mix of medium and high sensitivity. Landscape that is of high sensitivity is not resilient to change and therefore development should generally be avoided.

#### **8.77 Agricultural Land Quality**

- 8.78 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **8.79 Historic Environment**

- 8.80 The site falls within the Heaths HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of high sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development would have a significant impact on the historic environment. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments. The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

#### **8.81 Green Infrastructure**

- 8.82 There a number of hedgerows throughout the site that provides the boundary treatment to each of the fields within the area. A number of mature trees are also located within the site; these are primarily located within hedgerows and on the edge of the site. It is important to note that 2 trees on the western

edge of the site are covered by TPOs. Any development would need to be carefully planned to retain mature trees and important hedgerows.

8.83 A public footpath dissects the site in a north to south direction. This could help to improve access to facilities in both Wythall whilst also providing recreational benefits.

8.84 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site contributes towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. Constraints and opportunities for conservation and promotion should be addressed during masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design. This zone has high potential, meaning a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

#### **8.85 Sustainability**

8.86 The site is within walking distance of local facilities in Wythall including retail, a doctors surgery and a primary school. Public transport is a viable option with a bus stop nearby and Whitlocks End Train Station within 1.2km where a large car park is available. This will provide good access to Birmingham via a sustainable mode of transport. This is considered to be a sustainable location within Wythall.

#### **8.87 Summary**

8.88 The site is in a sustainable location with good access to public transport and local facilities however the site plays a crucial Green Belt function in retaining a gap between the settlements of Wythall and Majors Green. In addition part of the site is considered to be of high landscape sensitivity. Overall it is considered that the site is not currently suitable to contribute towards the delivery of the initial housing target within the district.

#### **8.89 2013 Update**

8.90 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

## **Area 4: Land South of Houndsfield Lane adjacent to Lea Green Lane**

### **8.91 Site Description**

8.92 The site is approximately 7ha in size and is located to the South of Drakes Cross. The land consists of a number of fields of varying shapes and sizes. The site is bounded by Houndsfield Lane to the north, Lea Green Lane to the west and hedgerows to the south and east. The land levels rise across the site from 143m AOD in the south west corner to 150 m AOD in the north east corner of the site.

### **8.93 Site Assessment**

### **8.94 Site History**

8.95 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **8.96 Green Belt**

8.97 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and it is therefore important to consider the Green Belt function of the land. As with any site there is an element of encroachment into the wider countryside. The site forms part of the narrow parcel of land that separates Drakes Cross and Grimes Hill. Development of this scale in this particular location could significantly reduce the gap between the settlements and in the future may lead to the merging of settlements. There is potential for significant Green Belt harm in this location.

### **8.98 Flood Risk**

8.99 The site is located entirely within flood zone 1 and therefore is considered to have the lowest risk of flooding. Due to the size of the site a site specific flood risk assessment would be required at the planning application stage.

### **8.100 Visual Appraisal**

8.101 Views into the site are available from Houndsfield Lane, Lea Green Lane and the public footpath that runs adjacent to the site. Land levels fall away from



the settlement of Drakes Cross into the valley that is located between Grimes Hill and Drakes Cross. This creates a poor visual relationship between the site and Drakes Cross as development would appear to ‘spill over’ the side of Drakes Cross and into the wider countryside. It is considered that any development would appear unduly prominent when viewed from the south of the site from the public footpath.

#### **8.102 Landscape Sensitivity**

8.103 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

#### **8.104 Agricultural Land Quality**

8.105 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **8.106 Historic Environment**

8.107 The site falls within the Wythall Heath Historic Environment Character Zone (HECZ). The historic environment in this zone is of low sensitivity. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

8.108 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

#### **8.109 Green Infrastructure**

8.110 There are a number of trees located within the site although the vast majority are situated along field boundaries, particularly the southern boundary.

Hedgerows provide defined boundaries on the southern, western and eastern edges of the site. Mature trees and important hedgerows would need to be retained if development occurs.

8.111 There are no public footpaths within the site although a public footpath runs adjacent to its western boundary. The public footpath could provide links into the wider countryside and also local facilities in Wythall.

8.112 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. This zone also has medium potential for the presence of historic assets. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **8.113 Sustainability**

8.114 The site is within walking distance of local facilities in Wythall including retail at Drakes Cross Parade, a doctors surgery and a primary school. Public transport is a viable option with a bus stop on Alcester Road within 400m of the site and Wythall train station is approximately 1.3km from the site and Whitlocks End station is approximately 1.5km away. Whilst both stations are potentially beyond a reasonable walking distance it is only a short drive to the large car park that is available at Whitlocks End station. This will enable commuting via sustainable mode of transport. This is considered to be a sustainable location in Wythall.

### **8.115 Summary**

8.116 Whilst the site is considered to be within a reasonable walking distance of a range of local facilities there could be significant Green Belt harm if development occurred in this location. The site forms part of the narrow gap between Drakes Cross and Grimes Hill and development in this location could significantly reduce the gap and potentially lead to coalescence in the future. The site also has a poor visual relationship with Drakes Cross and any development could appear unduly prominent. Overall, it is therefore

considered that the site should not contribute to the delivery of the initial housing target in the district.

**8.117 2013 Update**

8.118 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

## **Area 5: Land South of Houndsfield Lane adjacent to Alcester Road**

### **8.119 Site Description**

8.120 The site is approximately 14ha in size and is located to the South of Drakes Cross. The land consists of a number of fields of varying shapes and sizes. The site is bounded by Houndsfield Lane to the north, Alcester Road to the west and hedgerows to the south and east. Land levels change notably across the site from approximately 163m AOD in the north west corner reducing to 150 m AOD in the south east corner.

### **8.121 Site Assessment**

### **8.122 Site History**

8.123 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **8.124 Green Belt**

8.125 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and it is therefore important to consider the Green Belt function of the land. As with any site there is an element of encroachment into the wider countryside. The site forms part of the narrow parcel of land that separates Drakes Cross and Grimes Hill. Development of this scale in this particular location could significantly reduce the gap between the settlements and in the future could lead to the merging of settlements. There could be significant Green Belt harm in this locality.

### **8.126 Flood Risk**

8.127 The site is located entirely within flood zone 1 and therefore is considered to have the lowest risk of flooding. Due to the size of the site a site specific flood risk assessment would be required at the planning application stage.

### **8.128 Visual Appraisal**

8.129 Views into the site are available from Houndsfield Lane, Alcester Road and from the public footpath that runs through and adjacent to the site. Land

levels fall away from the settlement of Drakes Cross into the valley that is located between Grimes Hill and Drakes Cross. This creates a poor visual relationship between the site and Drakes Cross as development would appear to 'spill over' the side of Drakes Cross and into the wider countryside. It is considered that any development could appear unduly prominent when viewed from south of the site either from the public footpath or Alcester Road.

#### **8.130 Landscape Sensitivity**

8.131 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

#### **8.132 Agricultural Land Quality**

8.133 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **8.134 Historic Environment**

8.135 The site falls within the Wythall Heath Historic Environment Character Zone (HECZ). The historic environment in this zone is of low sensitivity. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

8.136 A listed building is located adjacent to the site. Shawbrook, 349 & 351 Alcester Road (Grade II) is located to the south of the site. Any development would need to respect the setting of this listed building.

### **8.137 Green Infrastructure**

8.138 There are a number of trees located within the site although the vast majority are situated along field boundaries. Hedgerows provide defined boundaries on the southern and eastern edges of the site. Mature trees and important hedgerows would need to be retained if development occurs.

8.139 A public footpath runs north to south through the eastern part of the site and a further public footpath lies adjacent to the eastern side of the site. These public footpaths could provide links into the wider countryside and also local facilities in Wythall.

8.140 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. This zone also has medium potential for the presence of historic assets. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **8.141 Sustainability**

8.142 The site is within walking distance of local facilities in Wythall including retail at Drakes Cross Parade, a doctors surgery and a primary school. Public transport is a viable option with a bus stop on Alcester Road within 400m of the site and Wythall train station is approximately 1.3km from the site and Whitlocks End station is approximately 2.7km away. Whilst both stations are potentially beyond a reasonable walking distance it is only a short drive to the large car park that is available at Whitlocks End station. This will enable commuting via a sustainable mode of transport. This is considered to be a sustainable location in Wythall.

### **8.143 Summary**

8.144 Whilst the site is considered to be within a reasonable walking distance of a range of local facilities there could be significant Green Belt harm if development occurred in this location. The site forms part of the narrow gap between Drakes Cross and Grimes Hill and development in this location would significantly reduce the gap and potentially lead to coalescence in the

future. In addition the site does not appear to relate well to Drakes Cross in visual terms and may appear unduly prominent. Overall, it is therefore considered that the site should not contribute to the initial housing target in the district.

#### **8.145 2013 Update**

8.146 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

## **Area 6: Land at Silver Street & Alcester Road**

### **8.147 Site Description**

8.148 The site area is approximately 4.6ha in size and is located to the south of Drakes Cross. The site comprises 4 fields and is used as pasture land. The site is bounded by residential development to the north and west, the Alcester Road to the east with hedgerows providing the boundaries to the south. The site is primarily flat and is approximately 160m AOD.

### **8.149 Site Assessment**

### **8.150 Site History**

8.151 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **8.152 Green Belt**

8.153 The site is entirely located in the Green Belt and it is therefore crucial to consider the Green Belt function of the land. The land in question forms part of the important gap between Drakes Cross and Grimes Hill. It is clear that development in this location could increase the possibility of coalescence in the future. The southern boundary of the site would be a hedgerow and there could conceivably be pressure to extend the site southwards towards the more defining boundary of Brick Kiln Lane. Development here would remove the level of openness that currently exists between the 2 settlements. It is therefore considered that significant Green Belt harm could be caused in this locality.

### **8.154 Flood Risk**

8.155 The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding. Although due to the size of the development a site specific flood risk assessment would need to be undertaken.



### **8.156 Visual Appraisal**

8.157 Short distance views into the site are limited from Silver Street and Alcester Road due to the presence of existing dwellings and mature hedgerows. Any development would not appear unduly prominent due to the flat nature of the site although development would be potentially visible from Brick Kiln and Wilmore Lane. However, the development would only be seen within the context of existing built form on Silver Street.

### **8.158 Landscape Sensitivity**

8.159 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

### **8.160 Agricultural Land Quality**

8.161 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **8.162 Historic Environment**

8.163 The site falls within the Wythall Heath Historic Environment Character Zone (HECZ). The historic environment of this zone is of low sensitivity. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

8.164 A listed building is located adjacent to the site. Shawbrook, 349 & 351 Alcester Road (Grade II) is located to the south of the site. Any development would need to respect the setting of this listed building.

### **8.165 Green Infrastructure**

8.166 Virtually the entire green infrastructure within the site is associated with field boundaries where there are hedgerows and a number of mature trees. Any mature trees and important hedgerows should be retained within the development.

8.167 The site contains no water features or public footpaths.

8.168 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site makes a limited contribution towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. This zone also has medium potential for the presence of historic assets. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **8.169 Sustainability**

8.170 The site is within walking distance of local facilities in Wythall including retail at Drakes Cross Parade, a doctors surgery and a primary school. Public transport is a viable option with bus stops adjacent to the site and Wythall train station is approximately 2.3km from the site and Whitlocks End station is approximately 3.2km away. Whilst both stations are potentially beyond a reasonably walking distance it is only a short drive to the large car park that is available at Whitlocks End station. This will enable commuting via a sustainable mode of transport. This is considered to be a sustainable location in Wythall.

### **8.173 Summary**

8.174 In many ways the site is relatively unconstrained and performs well against a number of sustainability criteria including the availability of public transport options. However the benefits of this site are outweighed by the Green Belt harm. Development in this location would reduce the gap between Grimes Hill and Drakes Cross and therefore could lead to coalescence between the settlements. To prevent this potential Green Belt harm this site should not contribute to the initial housing target in the district.

### **8.175 2013 Update**

8.176 Part of the site has been promoted through the SHLAA process (BDC87). The site promoted under reference BDC87 includes the 2 fields adjacent to the Alcester Road. The site is not currently considered to be suitable for development due to its Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

## **Area 7: Land North of Silver Street**

### **8.177 Site Description**

8.178 The site area is approximately 12.3ha in size and is located to the west of Drakes Cross. The land contains a variety of recreational uses including tennis courts, a cricket pitch and a bowling green. The site is bounded by residential development to the east, Silver Street to the south with hedgerows and trees providing the boundaries to the north and west. The site is primarily flat and is approximately 168m AOD.

### **8.179 Site Assessment**

### **8.180 Site History**

8.181 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **8.182 Green Belt**

8.183 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and it is therefore important to consider the Green Belt function of the land. As with any site there is an element of encroachment into the wider countryside but further sprawl would be prevented by relatively strong boundaries. A dense band of trees are located to both the north and west to contain development. There are no settlements directly west of Drakes Cross and therefore coalescence is not considered to be an issue.

### **8.184 Flood Risk**

8.185 The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding. Although due to the size of the development a site specific flood risk assessment would need to be undertaken.

### **8.186 Visual Appraisal**

8.187 Views into the site are limited by dense bands of trees around the boundary. Existing residential development along Alcester Road and Silver Street reduce views into the site. The main short distance views are from the public

footpath that runs through the heart of the site. The dense screening and flat nature of the site ensure that any development would not appear unduly prominent.

#### **8.188 Landscape Sensitivity**

8.189 The landscape in this area is of high sensitivity. Landscape of high sensitivity is not resilient to change and therefore any significant development should be avoided.

#### **8.190 Agricultural Land Quality**

8.191 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **8.192 Historic Environment**

8.193 The site falls within the Batemans Green HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of high sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development would have a significant impact on the historic environment. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

8.194 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

#### **8.195 Green Infrastructure**

8.196 There are a significant number of trees within the site including a dense band of trees on the northern boundary. There are also some hedgerows within the site. Mature trees and important hedgerows would need to be retained if development occurs.

8.197 There are 2 public footpaths that cross the site in a north to south direction that could provide links into the wider countryside and also local facilities in Wythall.

8.198 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site contributes towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. Constraints and opportunities for conservation and promotion should be addressed during masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design. This zone also has medium potential for the presence of historic assets. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **8.199 Sustainability**

8.200 The site is within walking distance of local facilities in Wythall including retail at Drakes Cross Parade, a doctors surgery and a primary school. Public transport is a viable option with bus stops adjacent to the site and Wythall train station is approximately 2.5km from the site and Whitlocks End station is approximately 3.5km away. Whilst both stations are beyond a reasonably walking distance it is only a short drive to the large car park that is available at Whitlocks End station. This will enable commuting via a sustainable mode of transport. This is considered to be a sustainable location in Wythall.

8.201 Development in this location would mean building on Wythall Park which would lead to the loss of a range of local recreational and sports facilities including tennis courts, a cricket pitch, bowling green and children's play facilities. The loss of such facilities would have a major negative impact on the local community.

### **8.202 Summary**

8.203 The Green Belt function of the site is more limited in comparison to a number of locations around Wythall and performs well against a number of sustainability criteria. However, the site is of high landscape sensitivity and the loss of recreational facilities would have an unacceptable impact on the

local community. It is therefore consider that the site should not contribute to the delivery of the initial housing target in the district.

**8.204 2013 Update**

8.205 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

## **Area 8: Land South of Packhorse Lane**

### **8.206 Site Description**

8.207 The site area is approximately 5ha in size is located to the west of Drakes Cross. The land consists of 2 fields that are used for pasture and also a hotel. The site is bounded by Packhorse Lane to the north, Alcester Road to the east, residential development to the south and hedgerows provide the boundary to the west. Land levels fall steadily from 165m AOD in the north to approximately 160m AOD at the southern end of the site.

### **8.207 Site Assessment**

### **8.208 Site History**

8.209 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **8.210 Green Belt**

8.211 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and it is therefore important to consider the Green Belt function of the land. As with any site there is an element of encroachment into the wider countryside. There are no settlements directly west of Drakes Cross and therefore coalescence is not considered to be an issue.

### **8.212 Flood Risk**

8.213 The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding. Although due to the size of the development a site specific flood risk assessment would need to be undertaken.

### **8.214 Visual Appraisal**

8.215 The public footpath that runs around the western and southern boundary provides short distance views into the site. However, the rising land levels at the northern end of the site highlights how prominent development would be in this particular location when viewed from the south. Development at the northern end of the site should therefore be avoided. However, with a SWS



located on the southern half of the site the net developable area is significantly compromised.

#### **8.216 Landscape Sensitivity**

8.217 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

#### **8.218 Agricultural Land Quality**

8.219 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **8.220 Historic Environment**

8.221 The site falls within the Headley Heath HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of high sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development would have a significant impact on the historic environment. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

8.222 A listed building is located adjacent to the site. Kingswood Meeting House and Sunday School, Packhorse Lane (Grade II) is located to the north west of the site. Any development would need to respect the setting of this listed building.

#### **8.223 Green Infrastructure**

8.224 There are a significant number of trees within the site although the majority are located in the more southern of the two fields. Both of the fields have

well defined hedgerow boundaries. Mature trees and important hedgerows would need to be retained if development occurs.

8.225 There is SWS within the boundary of the site. The SWS consists of pond surrounded by marsh and scrubby unimproved grassland. The SWS contains a wide mix of flora and fauna. The SWS significantly reduces the net developable area of the site and any development that did take place would need to ensure that there is no undue impact on this protected site.

8.226 There is a public footpath that is positioned adjacent to the southern and western boundaries of the site. This public footpath could provide links into the wider countryside and also local facilities in Wythall.

8.227 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site contributes towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. Constraints and opportunities for conservation and promotion should be addressed during masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design. This zone has high potential, meaning a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

#### **8.228 Sustainability**

8.229 The site is within walking distance of local facilities in Wythall including retail at Drakes Cross Parade and May Lane, a doctors surgery and a primary school. Public transport is a viable option with bus stops adjacent to the site and Wythall train station is approximately 2.7km from the site and Whitlocks End station is approximately 3.2km away. Whilst both stations are beyond a reasonable walking distance it is only a short drive to the large car park that is available at Whitlocks End station. This will enable commuting via a sustainable mode of transport. This is considered to be a sustainable location in Wythall.

### **8.230 Summary**

8.231 The development of the site would lead to some encroachment however the Green Belt function of the site is more limited in comparison to a number of locations around Wythall. The site has good access to many local facilities in Wythall and has reasonable access to public transport. It is considered that development would appear unduly prominent at the northern end of the site and with a SWS and protected trees within the site the net developable area would be greatly reduced. Development in this location would also potentially cause significant harm to an important local habitat. It is therefore considered that the site should not contribute to the delivery of the initial housing target in the district.

## **Area 9: Land North of Packhorse Lane**

### **8.232 Site Description**

8.233 The site is approximately 9ha in size and is located to the west of Hollywood. The land consists of a number of fields of various shapes and sizes and a small number of residential dwellings. The site is bounded by Packhorse Lane south, Alcester Road to the east, residential development on Dark Lane to the north and hedgerows provide the boundary to the west. There is a significant change in land levels across the site with levels rising from 150m AOD in the south to 164m AOD at the northern end of the site.

### **8.234 Site Assessment**

### **8.235 Site History**

8.236 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **8.237 Green Belt**

8.238 The site is located within the designated Green Belt and it is therefore important to consider the Green Belt function of the land. As with any site there is an element of encroachment into the wider countryside. The site is located close to the West Midlands conurbation but due to the residential development north of the site development in this location would not reduce the gap between the settlements and is unlikely to lead to coalescence.

### **8.239 Flood Risk**

8.240 The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding. Although due to the size of the development a site specific flood risk assessment would need to be undertaken.

### **8.241 Visual Appraisal**

8.242 Views into the site are restricted from the Alcester Road due to mature trees and hedgerows providing screening. Short distance views into the site are available from the public footpath adjacent to the western boundary.

Development is likely to appear more prominent at the northern end of the site where land levels rise however development in this location could be avoided. Overall it is considered that development could occur within the site without an undue visual impact.

#### **8.243 Landscape Sensitivity**

8.244 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

#### **8.245 Agricultural Land Quality**

8.246 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **8.247 Historic Environment**

8.248 The site falls within the Headley Heath HECZ. The historic environment of this zone is of high sensitivity. It is considered that medium to large scale development would have a significant impact on the historic environment. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

8.249 A listed building is located adjacent to the site. Kingswood Meeting House and Sunday School, Packhorse Lane (Grade II) is located to the west of the site. Any development would need to respect the setting of this listed building.

### **8.250 Green Infrastructure**

8.251 There are a significant number of trees within the site with dense groupings of mature trees in northern and eastern parts of the site. Four of these trees which are located on the northern boundary of the most southern field are covered by TPOs. All of the fields have well defined hedgerow boundaries. Mature trees and important hedgerows would need to be retained if development occurs.

8.252 There are 2 public footpaths that affect the site. One is positioned adjacent to the western boundary of the site and the other runs east to west through the heart of the site. This public footpath could provide links into the wider countryside and also local facilities in Wythall.

8.253 There is SWS within the boundary of the site. The SWS consists of unimproved lowland neutral grassland which is a BAP priority habitat. The SWS contains a wide mix of rare flora. The SWS reduces the net developable area of the site and any development that did take place would need to ensure that there is no undue impact on this protected site.

8.254 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site contributes towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. Constraints and opportunities for conservation and promotion should be addressed during masterplanning and Green Infrastructure design. This zone has high potential, meaning a range of high quality assets probably survive in the zone. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **8.255 Sustainability**

8.256 The site is within walking distance of local facilities in Wythall including retail at May Lane, a doctors surgery and a primary school. Public transport is a viable option with bus stops adjacent to the site and Wythall train station is approximately 2.4km from the site and Whitlocks End station is approximately 2.8km away. Whilst both stations are beyond a reasonably walking distance it is only a short drive to the large car park that is available at Whitlocks End

station. This will enable commuting via a sustainable mode of transport. This is considered to be a sustainable location in Wythall.

### **8.257 Summary**

8.258 The development of the site would lead to some encroachment however the Green Belt function of the site is more limited in comparison to a number of locations around Wythall. The site has good access to many local facilities in Wythall and has reasonable public transport options. However a SWS and dense areas of mature trees limit the developable area of the site. It is therefore considered that the site should not contribute to the initial housing target in the district.

### **8.259 2013 Update**

8.260 Part of the site has been promoted through the SHLAA process (BDC135B). The site promoted under reference BDC135B includes only the most southern field which is located adjacent to Packhorse Lane. The site is not currently considered to be suitable for development due to its Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

## **Area 10: Land at Selsdon Close**

### **8.261 Site Description**

8.262 The site is 3.1ha in size and is located on the south eastern side of Wythall. It is bounded by existing residential development fronting Lea Green Lane and Selsdon Close wrapping around the southern, western and part of the northern boundaries, and by the railway line to the east. The greenfield land is currently used for grazing.

### **8.263 Site Assessment**

### **8.264 Site History**

8.265 The site was promoted by the Council as a possible ADR at the Local Plan Inquiry. The Inspector agreed with the council acknowledging:

*“To sum up, I find WYT15 to be suitable as an ADR. Not only is it a suitable location convenient for public transport and served by a range of local services but development here would have a minimal impact on Green Belt functions.”*

8.266 The site was therefore included as an ADR within the adopted Local Plan.

### **8.267 Green Belt**

8.268 Whilst the site is not within the designated Green Belt it is important to consider any implications on the wider functioning of the Green Belt. The site is well contained with residential development to the south, west and north and the railway line is the defining boundary to the east. With such strong defensible boundaries the development of the site would not lead to any sprawl and there is no potential for coalescence between settlements. It is quite clear that the site has a very limited Green Belt function with no significant impact on the surrounding rural landscapes.

### **8.269 Flood Risk**

8.270 The site was assessed within the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. The site lies within flood zone 1 where there is the lowest risk of flooding.



### **8.271 Visual Appraisal**

8.272 Views into the site are limited to the short distance views available from Selsdon Close. The site is surrounded by residential development to the south, west and north limiting any longer distance views into the site. Further short distance views into the site may be possible for train passengers but changes in levels mean that development would not be visible from the platform itself. The site is also primarily flat and is therefore not considered to appear unduly prominent from any nearby locations.

### **8.273 Landscape Sensitivity**

8.274 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

### **8.275 Agricultural Land Quality**

8.276 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **8.277 Historic Environment Sensitivity**

8.278 The site falls within the Wythall Heath Historic Environment Character Zone (HECZ). The historic environment of this zone is of low sensitivity. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

8.279 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **8.280 Green Infrastructure**

8.281 With the exception of a couple of trees the majority of the green infrastructure is limited to edge of the site where there are trees and mature hedgerows.

Any mature trees and important hedgerows should be retained within the development.

8.282 There are no public rights of way or watercourses within the site.

8.283 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. This zone has medium potential for historic assets. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **8.284 Sustainability**

8.285 The site is within walking distance of local facilities in Wythall including retail, a doctors surgery and a primary school. In addition the train station is adjacent to the site and bus services are available nearby on Lea Green Lane. This is clearly a sustainable location within Wythall.

### **8.286 Summary**

8.287 The site has no obvious constraints and the site performs well against sustainability criteria. With strong defensible boundaries there are no significant implications on the wider Green Belt. The site is suitable to contribute to the delivery of housing in the district.

### **8.288 2013 Update**

8.289 The site (BDC86) was promoted for development through the SHLAA process. The site was not considered to have any significant constraints and was therefore thought to be suitable, available and deliverable. The SHLAA identified that the site could accommodate approximately 76 dwellings which is expected to come forward within 5 years.

8.289 In summer 2011 outline planning permission (application no. 11/0431) was granted for 76 dwellings on the Selsdon Close site and the reserved matters

application (11/0723) was also approved in late 2011. A range of detailed studies were submitted with the planning applications to highlight the limited nature of any constraints on the site. These included a transport assessment, ecological appraisal, flood risk assessment and a landscape character and visual assessment. Taylor Wimpey commenced work on-site in early 2012 and the development is expected to be completed in 2014.

## **Area 11: Land North of Norton Lane**

### **8.290 Site Description**

8.291 The gross site area is 5.1ha and is located on the eastern side of Wythall adjacent to the boundary with Solihull MBC. The site is bound by the River Cole to the east, the railway line to the west, residential development to the south and hedgerows to the north. The land was previously used as a refuse tip but is now effectively a greenfield site that has no current land use. There is a steady rise in land levels from approximately 145m AOD at the eastern end of the site to approximately 150m AOD in the west.

### **8.292 Site Assessment**

### **8.293 Site History**

8.294 The site was promoted as a possible ADR by the council at the Local Plan Inquiry. However, the Inspector recommended that the site should not be an ADR and remain as designated Green Belt. He concluded:

*"I am concerned that the development of WYT14 would seriously harm the integrity of the Green Belt, leading to the merging of Grimes Hill and Tidbury Green. Damage caused to Green Belt purposes would not be outweighed by the sustainability of the site and the potential for achieving a rail park and ride facility"*

### **8.295 Green Belt**

8.296 In terms of the Green Belt function of the site development would lead to a level of encroachment into the wider Green Belt. Whilst the site does have well defined boundaries with the railway to the west, the River Cole to the east and a dense line of trees to the north, the gap towards Tidbury Green would be significantly reduced. The potential for coalescence is heightened when considering that land adjacent the site (known as Lowbrook Farm) is reserved as a long term housing site in the Solihull UDP. Whilst there is little prospect of the site coming during the plan period it does highlight the potential for coalescence that should be avoided. It is therefore considered that

development in this location would lead to a significant reduction in the already narrow gap between Wythall and Tidbury Green.

### **8.297 Flood Risk**

8.298 The River Cole runs adjacent to the site and this has implications in terms of potential flood risk. The eastern part of the site falls within flood zone 2 and therefore a detailed flood risk assessment would be required to identify what mitigation would be required.

### **8.299 Visual Appraisal**

8.300 There are short distance views available into the site from Norton Lane. With land levels rising at the western end of the site there are concerns over the prominence of development in this location. Potentially development on the western part of the site could also appear prominent when viewed from the railway bridge on Station Road. Whilst it would be logical for development to avoid the western part of the site this is problematic due to flood risk adjacent to the River Cole.

### **8.301 Landscape Sensitivity**

8.302 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

### **8.303 Agricultural Land Quality**

8.304 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **8.305 Historic Environment**

8.306 The site falls within the Wythall Heath Historic Environment Character Zone (HECZ). The historic environment of this zone is of low sensitivity. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

8.307 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **8.308 Green Infrastructure**

8.309 There are a number of trees located on the site with the most notable grouping in the North West corner of the site. The majority of trees are on or near site boundaries and would therefore not be an undue constraint on development. Mature trees should be retained if development occurs.

8.310 The main water feature is the River Cole that provides the eastern boundary to the site although a small pool is located in the north east corner of the site. The River Cole is designated as a Special Wildlife Site (SWS) by the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. The river contains a range of semi-natural features including pool and riffle sequences, debris dams and a gravelly substrate. The aquatic flora is reasonable and submerged and emergent plants are present along much of the corridor, in places augmented by riverside marshland and occasional feeder streams. In many places the banks are lined with trees and shrubs which helps to create a valuable wildlife corridor through the countryside. The location of the SWS on the periphery of the site means that the land could be developed without causing harm to the wildlife corridor.

8.311 There are no public footpaths within or adjacent to the site.

8.312 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. However, this zone has medium potential for historic assets. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **8.313 Sustainability**

8.314 The site is adjacent to the railway station which has an hourly service available into Birmingham City Centre. Bus services are also available within a 5 minute walk of the site on Lea Green Lane. A local parade of shops and the GP surgery are all within 400m on Station Road and the nearest Primary School is within 800m of the site. Overall it is considered that the site is considered to be in a sustainable location within Wythall with a number of facilities within a reasonable walking distance.

### **8.315 Contamination**

8.316 The previous use of the site as a tip led to contamination on the site with the possibility of asbestos and/or chemicals. It is therefore clear that a level of remediation will be required with associated costs before development can take place.

### **8.317 Summary**

8.318 The site performs well in sustainability terms with access to public transport options and local facilities within walking distance. The site is constrained by flood risk, the SWS and contamination however these could be overcome through mitigation, avoidance and remediation. The potential prominence of development at the western end of the site is also a matter that would need to be addressed. The overriding concern is the impact that development would have on the Green Belt and in particular the potential for coalescence with Tidbury Green. It is therefore considered that the site is not suitable to contribute to the delivery of the initial housing target.

### **8.319 2013 Update**

8.320 The site has been promoted through the SHLAA process (BDC59) but is not currently considered to be suitable for development due to its Green Belt designation. The site assessment identifies that flood risk, biodiversity and contamination are all constraints to the development of the site. However, the SHLAA identifies that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

8.321 A Planning application (10/0931) has been refused on the site due to the harm caused to Green Belt. An appeal was submitted with a public inquiry held in July 2011 and the appeal (APP/P1805/A/11/2150938) was dismissed in September. The Inspector highlighted the scheme would conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. She observed that the “proposal would be an extension of Grimes Hill towards Tidbury Green and there would be some conflict with the purpose of preventing neighbouring settlements from merging into one another.” She also noted that “the development would represent an extension of built development into the countryside and would not assist in checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.” This appeal decision emphasises the critical Green Belt functions of this particular site.

8.322 An outline planning application was submitted to Solihull MBC for 200 dwellings on the long term housing site (Lowbrook Farm) adjacent to this site. Solihull MBC refused the applicant however the applicant submitted an appeal. A public inquiry was held in June 2013 and the outcome is expected later this year.



## **Area 12: Land South East of Station Road**

### **8.323 Site Description**

8.324 The site area is approximately 14ha and is located to the south east of Wythall. The site is effectively triangular in shape with 3 defined boundaries. The railway line is located to the east, residential properties are located to the north and Fulford Heath Golf Club is located to the south. A small section of the south eastern boundary also abuts the district boundary with Solihull MBC. The land is used is currently used for agricultural purposes. There is a steady rise in land levels from approximately 145m AOD at the south eastern corner of the site to approximately 155m AOD in the north east.

### **8.325 Site Assessment**

### **8.326 Site History**

8.327 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **8.328 Green Belt**

8.329 The site is located within the designated Green Belt. Development in this location could lead to sprawl into the wider countryside south east of Wythall. Whilst the site has defensible boundaries development would significantly reduce the gap to the settlement of Tanners Green. The potential for encroachment and the coalescence of settlements mean that development could cause significant harm to the Green Belt around Wythall.

### **8.330 Flood Risk**

8.331 The River Cole runs adjacent to the site and this has implications in terms of potential flood risk. The south eastern corner of the site falls within flood zone 2 and therefore a detailed flood risk assessment would be required to identify what mitigation measures would be necessary.

### **8.332 Visual Appraisal**

8.333 This triangular site is well contained by residential development along Station Road, trees and hedgerows to south and the railway line to the east. This relatively low lying site is restricted to mainly short distance views from the adjacent Public Right of Way and passing trains. It is considered that any development in this location would not appear unduly prominent.

### **8.334 Landscape Sensitivity**

8.335 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

### **8.336 Agricultural Land Quality**

8.337 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **8.338 Historic Environment**

8.339 The site falls within the Wythall Heath Historic Environment Character Zone (HECZ). The historic environment of this zone is of low sensitivity. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

8.340 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **8.341 Green Infrastructure**

8.342 The site contains a couple of small pools and the River Cole is adjacent to the site and these provide opportunities for biodiversity. The River Cole is designated as a Special Wildlife Site (SWS) by the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. The river contains a range of semi-natural features including pool and riffle sequences, debris dams and a gravelly substrate. The aquatic flora is reasonable and submerged and emergent plants are present along much of the corridor, in places augmented by riverside marshland and occasional feeder streams. In many places the banks are lined with trees and shrubs which helps to create a valuable wildlife corridor through the countryside. The location of the SWS on the periphery of the site means that the land could be developed without causing harming the wildlife corridor.

8.343 There is a large grouping of mature trees in the centre of the site that would reduce capacity and a number of hedgerows located within and on the edge of the area. Mature trees and important hedgerows would need to be retained if development occurs.

8.344 A public footpath runs adjacent to the southern boundary of the site which would provide access by foot to the wider countryside and also facilities in Wythall if development was to occur.

8.345 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. This zone has medium potential, meaning that there is some potential for historic assets. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **8.346 Sustainability**

8.347 The site is within walking distance of local facilities in Wythall including retail, a doctors surgery and a primary school. Public transport is a viable option with the train station and a bus stop nearby. This is clearly a sustainable location within Wythall however it should be noted that the site currently has no direct

road access and would require the demolition of one or more properties on Station Road. This could hamper the delivery of the site.

### **8.348 Summary**

8.349 The site performs well against sustainability criteria but this is outweighed by the significant Green Belt harm that would be caused by development in this location. Development would lead to a notable reduction in the gap with Tanners Green which is in Solihull MBC, thereby contributing towards coalescence between settlements and also leading to encroachment into the wider countryside. The potential capacity of the site is also reduced by an area of flood risk and a grouping of mature trees in the centre of the site. Access is also considered to be a problem as the site does not currently have direct access onto a road with resultant land assembly issues. It is therefore not considered that the site is suitable to contribute to the delivery of the initial housing target in the district.

### **8.350 2013 Update**

8.351 The whole site has recently been promoted through the SHLAA process (BDC211) but is not currently considered suitable due its Green Belt designation. However, the site is worthy of consideration when the Green Belt Review is undertaken.

## **Area 13: Land West of Alcester Road**

### **8.352 Site Description**

8.353 The site area is approximately 7.2ha and is located to the west of Wythall.

The site comprises of 5 fields and is used as pasture land. Residential properties abut the site to the north and south with the Alcester Road providing the boundary to the east and the Hollywood By-pass to the west. There is a steady rise in land levels from approximately 160m AOD at the northern end of the site to approximately 165m AOD in the south.

### **8.354 Area Assessment**

### **8.355 Site History**

8.356 There is no history of this site being promoted through the Local Plan process in relation to the adopted Local Plan.

### **8.357 Green Belt**

8.358 The site is located within the designated Green Belt. Development in this location would lead to encroachment into the wider countryside west of Wythall. The Alcester Road has long been the defining Green Belt boundary on the western side of Grimes Hill. If development were to occur in this location the Hollywood By-Pass would provide a defining boundary to the west to prevent further sprawl into the countryside. Although it is considered that setting a precedent by permitting development west of the Alcester Road could put greater pressure on Green Belt boundaries in Drakes Cross.

### **8.359 Visual Appraisal**

8.360 The site is enclosed on all sides by roads meaning that there is potential for views into the site from all sides. However, existing dwellings limit views into the site and dense tree planting adjacent to the Hollywood By-Pass provide good screening. Even when viewing the site from a raised position on Wilmore Lane (above the Hollywood By-Pass) there are only very restricted views available through the trees. There are short distance views available in places along the Alcester Road which highlight that the north eastern portion

of the site would be increasingly prominent if development occurred due to rising land levels. Overall it is considered that development could take place without causing undue visual harm.

### **8.361 Landscape Sensitivity**

8.362 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

### **8.363 Agricultural Land Quality**

8.364 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **8.365 Historic Environment**

8.366 The site falls within the Wythall Heath Historic Environment Character Zone (HECZ). The historic environment of this zone is of low sensitivity. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

8.367 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **8.368 Green Infrastructure**

8.369 The only water features within the site are 2 lakes near to the northern boundary. A number of hedgerows are located within the site and provide the boundary treatment to each field. There are a number of mature trees within the site but the vast majority are on the boundary of the site, 2 of which are

covered by a TPO. Mature trees and important hedgerows should be retained if development occurs.

8.370 There are no public rights of way within or adjacent to the site.

8.371 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. This zone has medium potential, meaning that there is some potential for historic assets. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

#### **8.372 Sustainability**

8.373 The site is within walking distance of local facilities in Wythall including retail, a doctors surgery and a primary school. Public transport is a viable option with bus stops adjacent to the site and Wythall train station is approximately 1.6km from the site and Whitlocks End station is approximately 3.6km away. Whilst both stations are beyond a reasonable walking distance it is only a short drive to the large car park that is available at Whitlocks End station. This will enable commuting via a sustainable mode of transport. This is considered to be a sustainable location in Wythall.

#### **8.374 Summary**

8.375 In physical terms the site is relatively unconstrained and performs well against many sustainability criteria. However, development west of the Alcester Road could lead to encroachment into the Green Belt and set a precedent for further development west of the Alcester Road. Due to the potential Green Belt harm it is not considered that the site is suitable to contribute to the initial housing target.

#### **8.376 2013 Update**

8.377 The whole site has recently been promoted through the SHLAA process (BDC225) but is not currently considered suitable due its Green Belt designation. However, the site is worthy of consideration when the Green Belt Review is undertaken.

## **Area 14: Bleakhouse Farm, Station Road**

### **8.378 Site Description**

8.379 The site is approximately 6.3 ha in size and forms part of a larger area of land that totals 31.5ha. The site is bounded to the north by open fields and to the west by Gorsey Lane. Residential development is located to the south and east. The site is currently used for grazing and pony paddocks. Whilst the original farmhouse has been demolished a number of agricultural buildings still remain on the site. There is a steady rise in land levels from approximately 155m AOD at the northern end of the site to approximately 160m AOD in the south.

### **8.380 Site Assessment**

#### **8.381 Site History**

8.382 The site was promoted by developers at the Local Plan Inquiry as a possible ADR. The Inspector agreed that the site was suitable for designation as an ADR and commented:

*“The site at Bleakhouse Farm is in a sustainable location, within walking/cycling distance of railway station and close to local amenities and schools.... It would have only a slight impact on the openness of the valley separating Drakes Cross and Grimes Hill and would relate well to existing residential development flanking Station Road, The Spinney and Gorsey Lane”*

8.383 The Council followed the recommendations of the Inspector and included the site as an ADR within the Local Plan which was adopted in 2004.

#### **8.384 Green Belt**

8.385 Whilst the site has been removed from the Green Belt it is important to consider it's wider Green Belt function. As with all sites there is an element of encroachment into the countryside. The settlements of Drakes Cross and Grimes Hill are located close together and therefore coalescence is a critical issue. Well defined hedgerows provide the boundary across much of the



northern edge of the site to ensure a significant gap is retained between these 2 built up areas.

#### **8.386 Flood Risk**

8.387 The site was assessed within the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. The site is located within flood zone 1 where there is the lowest risk of flooding.

#### **8.388 Visual Appraisal**

8.389 Short distance views are available into the site from both Station Road and Gorsey Lane. Land levels rise towards the south of the site however this helps to contain any proposed built form. The views available from the public footpath to the south highlight that any development would be viewed within the context of existing built form on Station Road and Gorsey Lane. It is therefore considered any development would not be unduly prominent in this location.

#### **8.390 Landscape Sensitivity**

8.391 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

#### **8.392 Agricultural Land Quality**

8.393 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

### **8.394 Historic Environment**

8.395 The site falls within the Wythall Heath Historic Environment Character Zone (HECZ). The historic environment of this zone is of low sensitivity. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

8.396 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

### **8.397 Green Infrastructure**

8.398 There are number of hedgerows throughout the site that provide the boundary treatment to each of the 4 fields within the area. A number of mature trees are also located within the site; these are primarily located within hedgerows and on the edge of the site. The whole of the site is covered by a group TPO. Any development would need to be carefully planned to retain trees and important hedgerows.

8.399 There are no water features or public rights of way within the site.

8.400 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site has a limited contribution towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. This zone has medium potential, meaning that there is some potential for historic assets. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

### **8.401 Sustainability**

8.402 The site is within walking distance of local facilities in Wythall including retail, a doctors surgery and a primary school. Public transport is a viable option with the train station and a bus stop nearby. This is clearly a sustainable location within Wythall.

### **8.403 Summary**

8.404 The site is in a sustainable location with good access to public transport and local facilities. The land between the two built up areas of Wythall has an

essential Green Belt function but Bleakhouse Farm can be carefully developed without causing coalescence by utilising existing field boundaries. The existence of a group TPO is a constraint that can be overcome by careful design and layout. Overall the site is suitable to contribute to the initial housing target.

#### **8.405 2013 Update**

8.406 The site (BDC66) was promoted for development through the SHLAA process. The site was not considered to have any significant constraints and was therefore thought to be suitable, available and deliverable. The SHLAA identified that the site could accommodate approximately 178 dwellings which is expected to come forward over the next 5 years.

8.407 In 2013 the Council resolved to grant outline permission (12/0912) for 178 dwellings, subject to the signing of a S106 agreement. The reserved matters application is expected by the end of 2013.

## **Area 15: Land North East of Gorsey Lane**

8.408 The site is approximately 6.9ha in size and is located to the north of Grimes Hill. The site comprises 3 fields and is used as pasture land. The site is bounded by Gorsey Lane to the west, with hedgerows providing the boundaries to the north, east and south. The site is relatively flat with a modest change in land levels from 156m AOD in the south reducing to 154m AOD at the northern end of the site.

### **8.409 Site Assessment**

#### **8.410 Site History**

8.411 The site forms part of a much larger parcel of land that was promoted by developers as a possible ADR at the Local Plan Inquiry. The Inspector did not support large scale development that would effectively in-fill the gap between Drakes Cross and Grimes Hill. He stated:

*“Extensive development in the rural setting would encroach into the countryside and cause neighbouring settlements to merge. It would contribute to the perception of a continuous swathe of development sprawling southwards from the conurbation to the southern edge of Grimes Hill.”*

#### **8.412 Green Belt**

8.413 The site is entirely located in the Green Belt. It is clear that development in this location would reduce the gap between Grimes Hill and Drakes Cross and increase the possibility of coalescence in the future. It is therefore considered that there could be significant Green Belt harm caused in this locality.

#### **8.414 Flood Risk**

8.415 The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding. Although due to the size of the development a site specific flood risk assessment would need to be undertaken.

#### **8.416 Visual Appraisal**

8.417 Short distance views of the site are available from Station Road and Gorsey Lane highlighting the open nature of the site. However, the site is flat and not unduly prominent when viewed from the public footpaths that are located north of the site. Any development would be viewed within the context of existing built form on Station Road and Gorsey Lane. It is not considered that significant visual harm would be caused if development in this location.

#### **8.418 Landscape Sensitivity**

8.419 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

#### **8.420 Agricultural Land Quality**

8.421 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **8.422 Historic Environment**

8.423 The site falls within the Wythall Heath Historic Environment Character Zone (HECZ). The historic environment of this zone is of low sensitivity. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

8.424 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

#### **8.425 Green Infrastructure**

8.426 There are a number of trees within the site. The vast majority form part of field boundaries within or on boundary of the site. The vast majority of trees that are located on the boundary of Gorsey Lane are protected by a TPO and a group TPO also effects the most southern field. A number of hedgerows are also located within the site. Any mature trees and important hedgerows should be retained within the development.

8.427 A public footpath is located adjacent to the northern boundary of the site. This could improve access into the countryside if development occurs.

8.428 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. However, this zone has medium potential, meaning that there is some potential for historic assets. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

#### **8.429 Sustainability**

8.430 The site is within walking distance of local facilities in Wythall including retail, a doctors surgery and a primary school. Public transport is a viable option with bus stops adjacent to the site and the train station within walking distance of the site. This is considered to be a sustainable location in Wythall.

#### **8.431 Summary**

8.432 The site performs well in sustainability terms and is relatively unconstrained apart from a number of mature trees (some of which are protected) and hedgerows. However the benefits of this site are outweighed by the Green Belt harm. Development in this location would reduce the gap between Grimes Hill and Drakes Cross and therefore could lead to coalescence between the settlements. To prevent this potential Green Belt harm this site should not contribute to the initial housing target in the district.

#### **8.433 2013 Update**

8.434 The site has been promoted through the SHLAA process (BDC200) but is not currently considered to be suitable for development due to its Green Belt designation. However, the SHLAA identifies that the site should be considered as part of any Green Belt review that takes place in the future.

## **Area 16: Land West of Lea Green Lane**

### **8.435 Site Description**

8.436 The site area is approximately 8.7ha in size is located to the north of Grimes Hill. The site comprises of 4 fields and is used as pasture land. The site is bounded by residential development to the south, Lea Green Lane to the east with hedgerows providing the boundaries to the north and west. Land levels are approximately 150m AOD at the southern end of the site but steadily fall towards the northern edge of the site.

### **8.437 Site Assessment**

### **8.438 Site History**

8.439 The site forms part of a much larger parcel of land that was promoted by developers as a possible ADR at the Local Plan Inquiry. The Inspector did not support large scale development that would effectively in-fill the gap between Drakes Cross and Grimes Hill. He stated:

*“Extensive development in the rural setting would encroach into the countryside and cause neighbouring settlements to merge. It would contribute to the perception of a continuous swathe of development sprawling southwards from the conurbation to the southern edge of Grimes Hill.”*

### **8.440 Green Belt**

8.441 The site is entirely located in the Green Belt and is located where the gap between Grimes Hill and Drakes Cross is at its narrowest and it is clear that development in this location would further reduce the gap and increase the possibility of coalescence in the future. It is therefore considered that significant Green Belt harm could be caused in this locality.

### **8.442 Flood Risk**

8.443 The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding. Although due to the size of the development a site specific flood risk assessment would need to be undertaken.



#### **8.444 Visual Appraisal**

8.445 Land levels fall away from the northern edge of Grimes Hill into the valley that exists between Grimes Hill and Drakes Cross. Any development in this location would give the appearance of ‘spilling over’ into the wider countryside. Such development would be prominent when viewed from Lea Green Lane and there are also concerns that it could be identified from Houndsfield Lane. Short distance views are also available from the public footpath that is located through the heart of the site. It is considered that development would appear unduly prominent in this location.

#### **8.446 Landscape Sensitivity**

8.447 The landscape in this area is of medium sensitivity. Whilst it would be preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas, landscape that is of medium sensitivity is resilient to some change.

#### **8.448 Agricultural Land Quality**

8.449 Using the Strategic Map provided by Natural England there appears to be a relatively low prospect (less than 20%) of the best and most versatile agricultural land being present on this site. Whilst it is preferable for the lowest quality agricultural land to be used for development there is significant amounts of land across the district where there is some prospect of there being high quality agricultural land present and therefore some high quality agricultural land will need to be lost. On this basis agricultural land quality is not an undue constraint on development.

#### **8.450 Historic Environment**

8.451 The site falls within the Wythall Heath Historic Environment Character Zone (HECZ). The historic environment of this zone is of low sensitivity. It is preferable for development to occur in low sensitivity areas where the historic environment can accommodate medium to large-scale developments.

8.452 The site is not within or adjacent to either a conservation area or any listed buildings. There are no other statutory designations associated with this site.

#### **8.453 Green Infrastructure**

8.454 The vast majority of the green infrastructure within the site is associated with field boundaries where there are hedgerows and a number of mature trees. Any mature trees and important hedgerows should be retained within the development.

8.455 A public footpath dissects the site and could provide links to the wider countryside and also facilities within the settlement of Wythall.

8.456 The amenity value of the HECZ shows that the site has limited contributions towards local distinctiveness and sense of place from the historic environment point of view. However, this zone has medium potential, meaning that there is some potential for historic assets. An archaeological survey would be required to fully assess this issue.

#### **8.457 Sustainability**

8.458 The site is within walking distance of local facilities in Wythall including retail, a doctors surgery and a primary school. Public transport is a viable option with bus stops adjacent to the site and the train station within a 5 minute walk of the site. This is considered to be a sustainable location in Wythall.

#### **8.459 Summary**

8.460 The site performs well in sustainability terms and is relatively unconstrained apart from a number of mature trees and hedgerows. However the benefits of this site are outweighed by the potential Green Belt harm and the visual impact in this particular location. Development in this location could appear unduly prominent and emphasise the reduced gap between Grimes Hill and Drakes Cross and therefore could lead to coalescence between the settlements. To prevent this potential Green Belt harm this site should not contribute to the delivery of the initial housing target in the district.

#### **8.461 2013 Update**

8.462 There are no changes with respect to the assessment of this site. No part of this site has ever been promoted through the SHLAA.

#### **8.463 Overall Conclusions for Wythall**

8.464 In total 16 sites have been considered around Wythall. In conclusion the following 2 sites have been identified as being suitable to contribute towards the initial housing target in Bromsgrove District and these are as follows:

- Area 10: Land at Selsdon Close
- Area 14: Bleakhouse Farm, Station Road

8.465 The SA accompanying the site assessment highlighted that these two sites performed best against the SA objectives. The areas performed well due to the close proximity to existing facilities and services, the opportunity to travel by sustainable modes and the limited nature of any environmental constraints. The SA therefore supports the outcome of the site assessment.

#### **8.466 2013 Update**

8.467 Both of these sites were subsequently included within the DCS2 which went out to consultation between January and April 2011. The following issues were highlighted by residents in relation to both sites:

- Roads are unable to cope with traffic
- Schools and doctors surgeries are full to capacity and the police service is overstretched
- Loss of Green Belt
- Brownfield land should be used instead
- Development would lead to increased crime
- Harm to the character of the area and the loss of a rural feel
- Impact on property prices
- Harm to wildlife
- Inconvenience likely to be caused during construction phase

8.468 A response was also received by GL Hearn (on behalf of Gallagher Estates) who support the allocation of land at Bleakhouse Farm. They highlight that the site is suitable for residential development and is in a sustainable location. In addition they suggest that the site could be expanded without having an

undue impact on the Green Belt gap between Grimes Hill and Drakes Cross. The land referred to is assessed under area 15.

8.469 Responses to each individual comment have been have been published by the Council and are available on the Council website.

8.470 Following the publication of the DCS2 outline planning permission (application no. 11/0431) was granted for 76 dwellings on the Selsdon Close site and the reserved matters application (11/0723) was also approved in late 2011. Taylor Wimpey commenced work on-site in early 2012 and the development is expected to be completed in 2014.

8.471 The Council has also resolved to grant outline permission (12/0912) at Bleakhouse Farm for 178 dwellings, subject to the signing of a S106 agreement. The reserved matters application is expected by the end of 2013.

## **9. Overall Conclusions**

9.1 A large number of sites have been considered around the settlements of Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Catshill, Hagley, Rubery and Wythall. These sites have been considered against a range of relevant planning considerations and subject to a robust Sustainability Appraisal process and the following sites are considered to be most suitable for development over the next 10 years prior to a full Green Belt Review:

- Alvechurch
  - Land to the rear of Oak Tree Close
  - Land to the east of Birmingham Road and north of Old Rectory Lane
- Barnt Green
  - Land at Kendal End Road
- Catshill
  - Land at Church Road
- Hagley
  - Land at Kidderminster and Stourbridge Road
- Wythall
  - Bleakhouse Farm, Gorsey Lane
  - Selsdon Close

9.2 It was considered that there are currently no suitable sites around the periphery of Rubery. This is primarily due to the Green Belt function of the land. Concerns were raised that development could result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area and in particular locations coalescence was also an issue in relation to Barnt Green and Catshill.

9.3 All sites have been re-appraised since 2010 in light of the responses to the Draft Core Strategy 2, new evidence and the introduction of the NPPF. None of these considerations have warranted a different conclusion in the assessment of these sites. The suitability of these sites is outlined by the fact that the majority now have planning permission and in some cases houses are currently under construction.

- 9.4 This assessment provides an important overview of the key issues, opportunities and constraints of all parcels of land around the large settlements. This information can be used to inform the Green Belt Review which will be undertaken following the adoption of the Bromsgrove District Plan. The Green Belt Review will need to identify sufficient land to ensure that to ensure that the target of 7,000 homes can be achieved by 2030. Currently sufficient land has been identified to deliver 4,500 homes by the period 2022/2023 meaning land for approximately 2,500 homes will need to be found for the period 2023-2030. In addition to this, the NPPF is clear that once defined Green Belt boundaries should have permanence and be capable of enduring beyond the plan period. The Green Belt Review will therefore need to identify sufficient land for both housing and employment for the 10 year period between 2030 and 2040.
- 9.5 It is also recognised that the conurbation may be unable to meet their full housing needs within their own administrative boundaries. Therefore under the 'Duty-to-Cooperate' the Council will need to work constructively with authorities in the West Midlands conurbation in order to resolve the issue of meeting unmet housing needs. This may mean that there will be a need to identify land adjacent to the boundary with the conurbation to accommodate its housing needs. At this stage the quantum of land for this purpose is unknown, although a study has recently been commissioned which may begin to address this issue. In summary it is estimated that the following amounts of land are required:
- 128ha to deliver 2,500 dwellings for Bromsgrove needs (based on net density 65% developable area for housing at 30dph and the remaining 35% used for supporting infrastructure) e.g.  $((2,500/30)/65) \times 100$
  - 188ha of 'safeguarded land' capable of delivering 3680 dwellings (367dpa x 10)
  - 14ha of 'safeguarded land' for employment purposes (existing target of 2ha per annum rolled forward)
  - Unknown quantity of land to meet the growth needs of the conurbation

9.6 It is important that a clear framework is set for Green Belt Review to provide clarity and certainty for all individuals, organisations and other interested parties involved in the future growth of Bromsgrove District. The Settlement Hierarchy Topic Paper highlighted that there were 3 distinct tiers of settlements within the District as follows:

- Town – Bromsgrove
- Large Settlements – Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Catshill, Hagley, Rubery, Wythall
- Small Settlements – Other smaller settlements in the District

9.7 By its nature, a full Green Belt Review should consider all parcels of land around all settlements in the District although it is logical that a greater proportion of development should be focused in the most sustainable place (s). This hierarchy has been followed in the Bromsgrove District Plan with three large expansion sites identified around Bromsgrove Town. Based on the settlement hierarchy it is sensible to aim to provide the highest proportion of new growth in Bromsgrove Town whilst acknowledging some growth will need to be located in large settlements and potentially some very modest levels of growth in the smaller settlements. It is considered to be inflexible to apportion percentages or numbers of dwellings to each settlement as it is more important to identify the most suitable and deliverable sites rather than focussing on settlement specific targets.

9.8 It is clear that this assessment of the large settlements will have a role in beginning to identify sites which have with fewer constraints and which have a less significant Green Belt function. Much more detailed Green Belt work will be required to fully assess Green Belt functions on the ground and to identify the most appropriate site boundaries that can endure. This work also highlights the parcels of land where development has been promoted through the SHLAA. This emphasises that there are many areas, where subject to exclusion from the Green Belt, land is available for development and potentially deliverable.

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