

# Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment

for

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council



December 2016

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### Quality Assurance – Approval Status

This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with Waterman Group's IMS (BS EN ISO 9001: 2008, BS EN ISO 14001: 2004 and BS OHSAS 18001:2007)

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# I. Summary

- 1.1. This Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) was commissioned by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council in July 2016. It has been prepared by Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Ltd. in accordance with current best practice guidance for Landscape Character Assessment and is intended for use in a number of ways, including to:
  - Provide an overview of character across the Borough to bring together the information available on Solihull's landscape character into one composite document.
  - Inform local communities, businesses, landowners, Council Officers, Elected Council Members, developers and other stakeholders on the meaning and value of landscape character. The LCA presents a full range of scales of character in order to respond to the diverse nature of the Borough and the breadth of pressures and opportunities that exist.
  - Set a robust methodology to enable the work to be reliably updated and/or replicated at a future date to provide comparative data.
  - Define the key characteristics of the landscape. This relies on desk top studies, fieldwork and consultation to define distinct areas of character across the Borough. The process also makes judgements about each character area and provides guidelines that will help to manage change.
- 1.2. Solihull Metropolitan Borough is located on the southern edge of the West Midlands Conurbation, between Birmingham and the Black Country in the west and Coventry to the east. The Borough is home to many assets where approximately two thirds of the Borough is countryside and designated Green Belt, which separates the West Midlands conurbation from surrounding settlements. The vital strategic gap between Birmingham/Solihull and Coventry is known as the Meriden Gap. This area is predominantly rural, characterised by a series of settlements, historic villages, hamlets, scattered farmsteads and dwellings set within attractive countryside.
- 1.3. The LCA follows on from the Warwickshire Guidelines: Arden (Warwickshire County Council 1993) and four of the seven districts identified in this document occur in Solihull Borough.
- 1.4. It is intended that the LCA will assist in supporting the Solihull Local Plan process in considering spatial planning options and decisions within the planning application process. The document is also intended to inform community development, village plans, countryside priorities, heritage and historic landscape characterisation work, education, employment and housing initiatives through to contribution it makes to the understanding of the natural, cultural and perceptual factors of the landscape.
- 1.5. The LCA has identified ten broad landscape character areas within the Borough and within three of these broad Landscape Character Areas, sub-areas are also defined. Each area and sub-area is then finalised with judgements about landscape character sensitivity, visual sensitivity and the overall general capacity to accept development and change.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1. The Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) provides a detailed breakdown of areas of distinct landscape character across the Borough. It determines and describes the character and the sensitivities, pressures and capacity for each area and makes judgements about each area resulting in guidelines to help manage landscape change. The document is supplemented by other background evidence and source material, which can be found within the following appendices of the LCA:
  - Appendix A: Methodology, which provides a detailed report on the procedure followed for the LCA;
  - Appendix B: Landscape Character Baseline, provides a detailed report on the relevant supporting planning policies and other documentation currently in place for the Borough of Solihull; and
  - Appendix C: Stakeholder Workshop Consultation - a summary of the consultation.
  - Appendix D: Solihull Borough Landscape Character Area Map;
  - Appendix E: Bibliography; and
  - Appendix F: Glossary.
- 2.2. The LCA is intended to be used in conjunction with the Local Character Guide has been prepared as part of the LCA process, which is intended to provide a non-technical summary of the Landscape Character Assessment. The aim is that the LCA Local Character Guide can be used by planning officers to explain the meaning, value and sensitivity of character to local communities, businesses, landowners and council members.
- 2.3. The LCA and all documents prepared through the assessment process are intended to form part of the evidence base for Solihull's Local Plan process. The aim is that they will assist in informing development management decisions and will be material consideration in the planning application process. The documents are also intended to be used to assess the capacity of the Borough to accommodate future development.
- 2.4. Landscape Character Assessment is used to identify individual areas that are distinct from one another due to their prevailing characteristics and features. These individual areas are then presented in further detail by looking at the unique combination of these characteristics and features. Although one individual area may be distinct from the next in terms of its core characteristics, often the boundaries may have overlapping features or elements, which may be perceived as a transitory space.
- 2.5. The LCA Methodology as outlined in Appendix A of this document is based on current best practice and guidance from the following sources:
- 2.6. 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment', Natural England, 2014;
- 2.7. 'TOPIC PAPER 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity', The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002; and
- 2.8. 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), Third Edition, 2013.
- 2.9. An internal steering group was set up at the beginning of the project and met up three times during 2016. One workshop inviting stakeholders was organised inviting comments and informative feedback, which has been incorporated into the LCA. The Stakeholder Workshop Consultation feedback is summarised within Appendix C of this document.

## 3. Context

### Planning context:

- 3.1. As set out earlier, the LCA is intended to be used in conjunction with the Solihull Local Plan process. The Plan includes policies to be used in support of planning applications for development within the Borough that may affect the landscape character of the area.
- 3.2. The policies within the Local Plan that have direct relevance to the LCA are listed below and detailed further within Appendix B of this document:
  - Policy P10: Natural Environment
  - Policy P11: Water Management
  - Policy P13: Minerals
  - Policy P14: Amenity
  - Policy P15: Securing Quality Design
  - Policy P16: Conservation of Heritage Assets and Local Distinctiveness
  - Policy P17: Countryside and Green Belt
  - Policy P18: Health and Well Being
  - Policy P20: Provision for Open Space, Children's Play, Sport, Recreation and Leisure.

### National and Regional Area Context:

- 3.3. The National Character Area (NCA) profiles prepared by Natural England divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each area is then defined by a combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity. Their boundaries follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries.
- 3.4. The Borough of Solihull is located within NCA Profile: 97 Arden. The key relevant characteristics of 97: Arden pertaining to Solihull is set within Appendix B of this document.
- 3.5. The document Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines, Arden (1993) prepared by the Warwickshire Landscape Project and adopted by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council as a Supplementary Planning Document categorises Warwickshire county in Landscape Character Types that are broken down into sub-areas. Solihull falls within the sub-area of Arden and further detail of guidelines that offer advice on maintaining the diversity and beauty of the area are set out within Appendix B of this document.
- 3.6. The Warwickshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Project (2010) was undertaken by Warwickshire County Council Museum Field Services between May 2006 and March 2010. The Project forms part of a national programme of Historic Landscape Characterisation funded and administered then by English Heritage (now Historic England). The aim is to achieve an understanding of the historic and cultural origins and development of the present day landscape through a desk-based programme of digital mapping, description and analysis, by the identification of the physical remains visible within the landscape that demonstrate the processes by which it has reached its present form. Further details are set out in Appendix B.
- 3.7. The West Midlands Farmsteads & Landscapes Project (2010) is a collaborative project led then by English Heritage (now Historic England) in partnership with the region's county and metropolitan councils and with the support of Advantage West Midlands. The Project has:
  - Mapped and described the locations and characteristics of over 22, 000 historic farmsteads, how they have changed over time and how they relate to the landscape;

- Described the present use of historic farmsteads and their role in the economy of the West Midlands; and
  - Developed a set of planning tools to inform spatial planning, land management and economic development.
- 3.8. Further information about the West Midlands Farmsteads & Landscapes Project is set out in Appendix B.
- 3.9. The Airport Master Plan to 2030 (2007) sets out the next stages of the Draft Master Plan, which was published on 31 October 2005. Further information about the masterplan is presented in Appendix B. The key aims and objectives of the Master Plan are to:
- Illustrate how the further development of Birmingham International Airport is consistent with national, regional and local policies;
  - Provide a framework for the sustainable development of Birmingham International Airport;
  - Assess the implications of the further development of Birmingham International Airport and facilitate the development of a sustainable, multi-modal surface access strategy for the Airport, in conjunction with other agencies, stakeholders and surface access providers;
  - Outline the Airport Company's overall approach to sustainability and its proposals for environmental mitigation measures; and
  - Inform, and provide, a basis to address the needs of Birmingham International Airport, and its proposed further development, within the statutory Development Plan process.
- 3.10. The Coventry Urban Fringe Coventry City Council Landscape Assessment & Guidance Study (2007) was commissioned by Coventry City Council to evaluate the condition of the landscape within the context of the management guidelines set out within the Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines and the more recent Design Guidelines for Development in Coventry's Ancient Arden. Further details about the Coventry Urban Fringe Coventry City Council Landscape Assessment & Guidance Study is presented in Appendix B.
- 3.11. The Sub-Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy (2014) produced by Warwickshire Museum and Natural Environment aim is to provide evidence for the preparation of plans, policies and strategies relating to Green Infrastructure (GI) at a sub-regional level and at a local level. It also details how GI can be delivered with the help from landholders and partners. The strategy covers the disciplines of landscape, biodiversity and accessibility.

## 4. Overview of Borough Landscape Character

### Geology:

- 4.1. The Borough of Solihull has a relatively uniform geology comprising largely of Triassic Rocks predominantly within the Mercia Mudstone Group, with subgroups of the Arden Sandstone Formation (Siltstone and Sandstone) located throughout. A slightly differing area of geology is situated to the north of Knowle extending easterly towards Barston, comprising of the Lias Group. Predominantly containing the Wilmcote Limestone (interbedded limestone and mudstone) and Saltford Shale Member (mudstone), the Westbury Sandstone Formation and Blue Anchor mudstone Formation are also constituents within the Lias Group in this region.
- 4.2. The eastern extent of the Borough, northeast and east of Basall Common, comprises the Warwick Group (Siltstone and sandstone with subordinate mudstone). This is predominately made of the Hill Mudstone Formation (sandstones and mudstones), whilst the Allesley Sandstone Member and Keresley Member is found to the north.

### Soils:

- 4.3. Soil types across the region typically vary between two significant types: permeable alluvial and glacial clays, sand and gravel deposits; and acidic clayey loamy soils that are seasonally wet. Within these types, the soils across the Borough will display differences due to the influences of location, climate, topography, vegetation and land use.
- 4.4. Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) across the Borough is limited and appears to be relatively consistent in its classification. Typically, the majority of the classified land has been graded as Grade 3a or Grade 3b, although smaller land parcels have been classified as Grade 2 East of Solihull and Dorridge, respectively. Based on the limited information available, a generalisation of the Borough's general ALC Grading is likely to be Grades 3a and 3b with changes being dictated by local limiting factors.

### Hydrology:

- 4.5. The River Blythe and River Cole are the two main river systems that drain the eastern part of the Borough. The Cole Valley to the north is drained by the River Cole which goes on to join River Blythe outside of the Borough boundary where then flows into the River Tame then the River Trent. The south-western boundary of the Borough is marked by the River Cole.
- 4.6. The River Blythe traverses a large part of Solihull and is a tributary of River Tame in the north. The River Blythe is fed by Cuttle brook near Temple Balsall and a key feature is the meander that encircles Barston. The River Blythe is a designated SSSI which gives rise to water meadows and supports a wide range of flora which in turn has a positive impact on the landscape character of the area.
- 4.7. Both river systems are considered important features of the landscape within Solihull and their setting has great influence on the landscape character of the area.

## Landform and topography:

- 4.8. The Solihull countryside in particular has a generally undulating topography with wooded areas including mature hedgerows, remnants of ancient semi natural woodland and historic parklands.
- 4.9. The Borough is located within an upland catchment of the River Trent and River Severn (via the River Avon). A review of The Ordnance Survey (OS) Open Data indicates that the general topography of the Borough generally slopes northwards and elevations range from between approximately 180m AOD (metres Above Ordnance Datum) in the eastern area of Solihull down to 80m AOD in the northern area of the Borough.

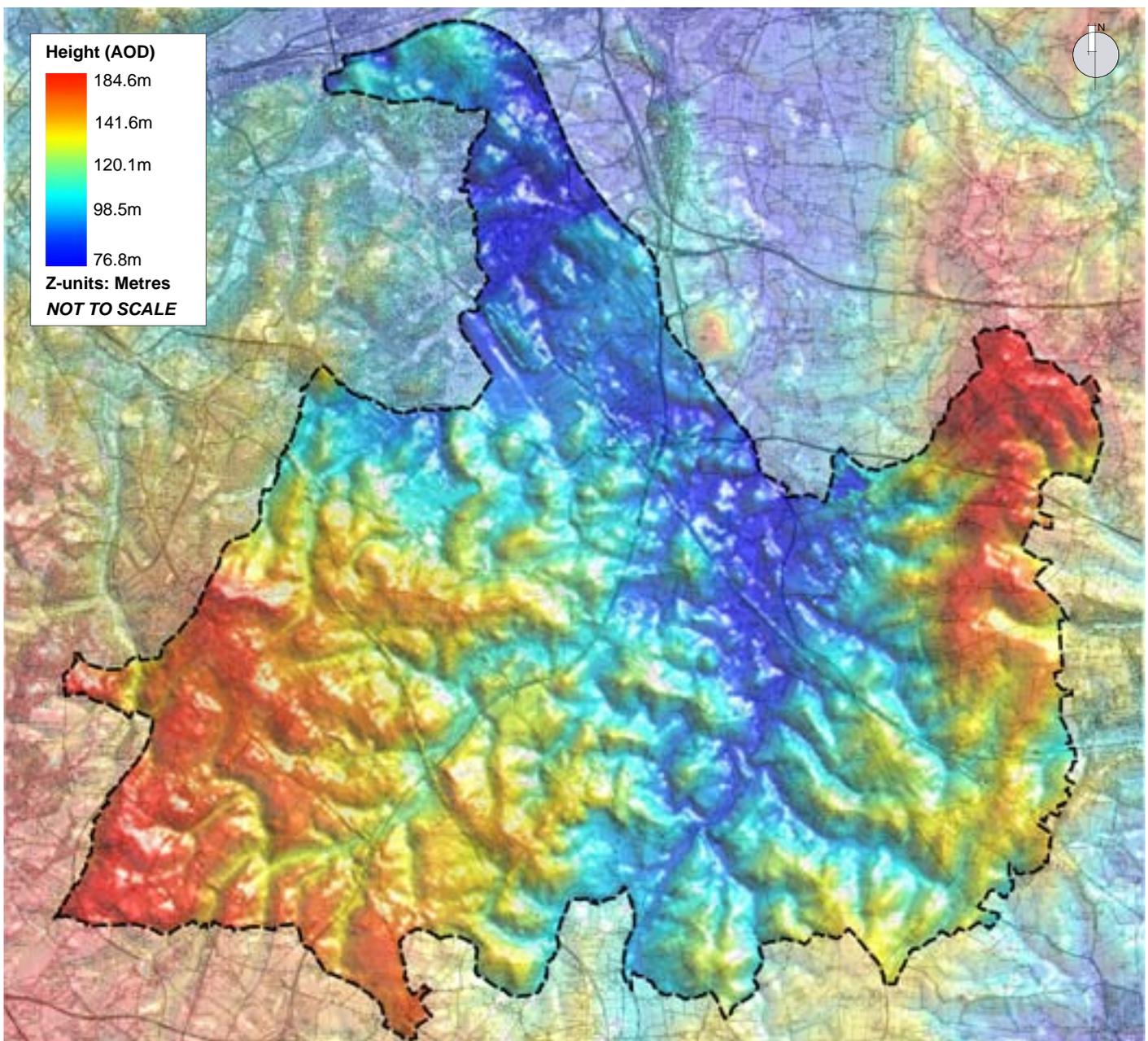


Figure 1: Terrain Analysis

## Land Use Pattern:

- 4.10. Solihull became a borough in 1965 comprising Solihull Town and 12 parish Councils. The Borough covers an area of approximately 178 sq. km to the south east of Birmingham, where the northern and western parts of the area support predominantly urban areas including Solihull Town Centre, Birmingham International Airport and the National Exhibition Centre. In contrast, the eastern and southern areas of the Borough contain the countryside that occupies a substantial proportion of the land use. Within these countryside areas the M42 corridor forms the separation between the urban areas to the west and the more rural areas to the east.
- 4.11. The Borough is diverse in its land use and land quality. Land outside of the urban areas ranges from very good to poor land quality with most of the land being designated Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural land. Small areas of Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land is present mostly along the Berkswell and Meriden Road corridors.
- 4.12. Within the River Blythe corridor and around Cheswick Green and Dickens Heath, pastureland and meadows dominate, due to the poor agricultural soil quality found in these areas.
- 4.13. The River Blythe valley to the north of the Borough, due to its geology is an area of mineral deposit and therefore mineral extraction and quarrying is the main land use here. Although through time as quarrying has ceased, the land has been restored to form recreational areas some comprising golf courses and angling lakes.

## Settlement and Infrastructure:

- 4.14. Settlement in the Borough comprises Solihull Town Centre, the National Exhibition Centre and the Solihull urban fringes to the south and east of the town centre. The main villages in the Borough include Dickens Heath, Cheswick Green, Knowle, Dorridge, Balsall Common, Hampton in Arden, there are also many isolated residential property and farmsteads with the rural eastern extent of the Borough.
- 4.15. Birmingham International Airport is a major transport hub location in the north west of the Borough. The M6 Motorway runs west to east on the northern boundary of the Borough and the M42 is a major transport corridor that runs north south through the centre of the Borough. Other major roads in the Borough include the A34, A45, A41 and A452. The Rugby-Birmingham-Stafford Railway Line, a loop off the West Coast Main Line runs north west to south east through the Borough, with several stations including Birmingham International, Hampton in Arden and Berkswell. Other rail lines traversing the Borough are the Chiltern line from Birmingham to London and the Birmingham to Stratford upon Avon line. There are also two canals that flow through Solihull; the Grand Union Canal that runs through the centre of Solihull, and the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal which crosses the south-western corner of the Borough. Canals have left features in the landscape including flights of locks, embankments, cuttings, lock cottages and bridges.

## Sustainability:

- 4.16. Within in the Borough there is currently a high demand for new housing developments due to the employment opportunities within the Borough, the proximity to Birmingham and public transportation links to London, this is particularly evident within the Solihull urban fringes and the M42 corridor. The demand for new development currently puts pressure on landscape and agricultural land with the Borough. Policy set out in the Local Plan 2013 is underpinned by the theme of sustainability through promoting economic and job growth and new housing to meet the Borough's needs whilst conserving and improving the character and quality of the environment, an important component of the Borough's attractiveness.

# 5. Borough Wide Landscape Guidelines

## Context:

- 5.1. As a result of physical processes and human activities, landscape character is constantly changing. Changes associated with social and political evolution through time result in the development of various land ownership and management regimes that influence landscape character.
- 5.2. Landscape change in the Borough has occurred in both the rural and urban areas as a result of physical processes, development and changes in land management. The development of Solihull was highly influenced by the 20th Century expansion of Birmingham south-eastwards. The Borough was predominantly rural with small historic towns and villages at Solihull, Meriden, Berkswell, Barston, Hampton-in-Arden, Knowle and Bickenhill until the end of the 19th Century, when Birmingham began to expand into rural Olton, with houses overlooking Olton Mere. The rural area once formed part of a huge area of wood pasture and ancient farm lands known as Arden with evidence of previous woodland, commons and heaths.
- 5.3. Large settlement expansion from Birmingham into Solihull occurred between 1900 and 1955, particularly during the inter-war period. This resulted in the development of large housing estates at Lyndon, Olton, Elmdon and Shirley stretching towards Solihull and at Castle Bromwich. Government and European policy have influenced land management changes and development considerably since the end of the Second World War. The emphasis has been on increased production. Now the focus is changing towards the environment, wildlife and biodiversity.
- 5.4. This section of the LCA sets out general landscape guidelines to manage landscape change related to the pressures which are Borough wide. The guidelines will support planning policy and help to manage landscape change when used in conjunction with the area specific guidelines contained within this document.

## Industry and Business Parks:

- 5.5. There are development pressures resulting from a need for employment opportunities within the Borough that are likely to continue. UK Central (previously known as the M42 Economic Gateway) is a major economic growth driver within the Greater Birmingham. The economic assets within the UK Central include Birmingham International Airport, The National Exhibition Centre, Jaguar Land Rover, Birmingham and Blythe Valley Business Parks and Solihull Town Centre.
- 5.6. Continued expansion of employment sites on the urban edge and within rural locations also has the potential to impart a negative effect on landscape character. Noise, traffic and lighting as associated with new development could also impact on landscape character; the historic environment, the setting of settlements and people's experience of the landscape.

### Guidelines

- New industrial and business developments should aim to respect and enhance the Character Area within which they are proposed, particularly in rural areas.
- New development should conserve and enhance biodiversity, landscape quality and consider the impact on and opportunities for green infrastructure at the earliest opportunity in the design process.
- Development within existing employment areas and business parks should maintain the attractiveness of the area to investors and protect and enhance the surroundings including the natural environment.
- Large buildings should be well-sited in relation to other features including tree cover and landform. The use of different textures and building materials can add interest and break up the massing of larger buildings.
- Proposals for industry and business park uses should consider landscape implications at the design stages and an appropriate landscape schemes should be submitted with planning applications.

## Residential Development:

- 5.7. The Solihull Local Plan (2013) and Local Plan Review (2016) sets out the policies and proposals to enable the Borough to grow and develop.
- 5.8. There is considerable demand for housing in the Borough resulting in development pressure for new residential areas. The area has strong economic assets, strategic transport infrastructure and a high quality environment making the Borough a desirable place in which to live, work and invest. As a result, there is continued development pressure on in the Borough particularly within the M42 Corridor, the Solihull urban fringes, villages in rural areas and the Green Belt.
- 5.9. In rural areas mature oak trees add a distinct quality to the landscape character of the area where they often form tree-lined streets in the mature suburb areas. Large front gardens also contribute to the leafy and Arcadian nature of some of these areas.
- 5.10. Building styles are a contributing factor to the landscape character and local distinctiveness between areas with varied styles that often impact positively on overall character. In contrast, modern buildings in rural villages and open countryside can sometimes appear incongruous.

### Guidelines

- Housing location, design and layout should respect local character.
- New development should conserve and enhance local character in terms of its distinctiveness and streetscape quality to ensure the scale, massing, density, layout, materials and landscape of development respects the surrounding natural, built and historic environment.
- Development should aim to retain existing landscape features which help define the character of areas, such as hedgerows, hedgerow trees, parkland trees and field patterns.
- It is beneficial for landscape works for new development sites to be considered in the early stages of design, to help integrate the development with its setting.
- Buildings should be well sited in relation to other features including tree cover and landform.

- New development should integrate the natural environment through the provision of gardens, quality open space and green infrastructure.
- Villages and settlement in the Borough have a distinct identity as a result of their historic origins and setting.
- It is important to maintain the identity of existing settlement and to avoid breaching the well-defined settlement edges.
- Careful selection of building materials utilising different textures and colour can add interest and break up the mass of larger buildings.
- Where new buildings are required they should be located in association with existing farmsteads and settlement across the area and located so as not to require new access arrangements.

## Lighting:

- 5.11. Inappropriate lighting in the countryside can impact considerably on landscape character and experience of the landscape. Lighting in the countryside can be disruptive to residents and ecology. The NPPG includes guidance on light pollution and notes that artificial light has the potential to become what is termed 'light pollution' or 'obtrusive light' and not all modern lighting is suitable in all locations.

### Guidelines

- Lighting for new developments should be assessed and considered where appropriate particularly when submitting landscape proposals in support of planning applications.
- Areas of the countryside in the Borough that retain a dark sky from the impacts of light pollution should be protected.
- Limiting the hours lighting is used, the use of down lights and minimising output should be considered as part of the landscape scheme.
- Lighting schemes should be designed to the safe minimum requirements for the purposes of the development.
- Care should be taken when designing lighting schemes to ensure that appropriate products are chosen and that their location to reduce spill light and glare has been fully considered.

## Transport:

- 5.12. Solihull is located in the centre of the national rail and motorway network with direct rail services to London, Birmingham and the north along the West Coast and Chiltern Mainlines and has excellent access to other regions in the UK through the M42, which links the Borough to the M6 at the northern boundary of the Borough and the M40 to the south. This strategic transport infrastructure also links together with Birmingham International Airport.
- 5.13. In recent years there has been a shift in transport policy more towards the management of travel demands, encouraging a shift away from car use and towards public transport, walking and cycling.
- 5.14. The route of the proposed HS2 rail network passes through the Borough, if it goes ahead it will influence landscape character and change in the Borough.

### Guidelines

- Route selections for new roads should take in to consideration the landscape character including vegetation patterns and topography.
- A landscape assessment should be carried out where appropriate prior to commencing improvements to existing roads and developing new road proposals.
- Improvements to meet highway standards can lead to a detrimental impact on landscape character, particularly in rural areas on country roads. Features such as railings, street lighting, concrete kerbs and signs can be visually intrusive and should be discouraged in rural areas where possible.
- Roadside hedgerows, mature oaks and irregular shaped verges are distinctive features in the borough and should be protected.
- Where possible the use of traditional materials including stone setts for kerbing and locally distinctive road signs should be encouraged.
- Where the irregular road network in the rural areas of the borough reflects the ancient landscape pattern and historic features of the area, this should be preserved.
- Where improvements to the road network are undertaken they should reflect the landscape pattern of the area and straight

lines should be avoided where they depart from this character.

## Communication Masts and Pylons:

- 5.15. Electricity power lines and substations are prominent features in parts of the Borough. In particular, there are two main powerlines crossing the Borough, one of these follows the M42 corridor and the other runs west east alongside the M42 from Knowle to the south east of Balsall Common where it then heads north towards to the western fringes of Coventry. Telecommunications masts are also common features within the landscape across the borough.

### Guidelines

- Where new electricity transmission line is required, detailed assessment to find the least detrimental routes to landscape character for new supply lines should be undertaken.
- The siting of telecommunication infrastructure within areas of ecological and geological importance, open space and green belt should be avoided. The impact on landscape character of development of telecommunication infrastructure should be considered, as should the potential for the sharing of telecommunication sites.

## Quarrying and Mineral Extractions:

- 5.16. The Solihull countryside is important for sand and gravel aggregates at the Berkswell and Meriden quarries. The area also has significant coal reserves. Mineral Safeguarding Areas have been defined for both underground coal and sand and gravel resources across the Borough. Mineral extraction can remove pastoral land, hedgerows and mature vegetation, however, restoring these areas provides a wide range of opportunities for landscape enhancement.

### Guidelines

- Quarrying and extraction activities are detractors to landscape character. A Full landscape and visual impact assessment is required to select the least visually intrusive locations for these activities.
- Restoration plans should be designed and included within planning applications for minerals sites.

- Restoration plans should aim to provide new and enhanced habitats and enhance and restore features characteristic of the Warwickshire Arden landscape.

### Recreational Activities:

- 5.17. Solihull's countryside plays a role in providing access and recreational activities for both people living in and outside of the Borough. There are a variety of opportunities for people to enjoy Solihull's countryside through the existing network of footpaths, towpaths and bridleways. The National Exhibition Centre (NEC) is important to the local and regional economy and is the UK's largest exhibitions centre and has become a major event, tourism and leisure venue, serving both business and leisure markets and contributing significantly to Solihull's and the Region's visitor economy.
- 5.18. Sporting activities that are pursued in the countryside are wide ranging.

#### Guidelines

- Development of high quality and accessible public realm, green spaces and green infrastructure.
- Planting proposals must integrate recreational developments within the surrounding countryside and pay regard to their wider setting.
- New development should protect and enhance physical access, including public rights of way to open space, green infrastructure and historical assets. Promotion of the use of footpaths will help maintain their presence and importance in the landscape including the associated benefits of health and well-being.

### Agriculture:

- 5.19. In the rural areas of the Borough the prevailing land use is agriculture, which contributes to the diverse landscape character and distinctive features of the area. In recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on the diversification of farmland including rural tourism, retail (farm shop and tea rooms) and solar farms.

#### Guidelines

- Conserve the pastoral character of the borough and identify opportunities for the conversion of arable land back to permanent pasture in traditionally pastoral areas.

- Resist loss of field boundaries to retain irregular field patterns. Discourage amalgamation of fields and promote awareness of the Hedgerow Regulations.

### Forestry and Woodland:

- 5.20. Historically, the Solihull countryside formed part of a huge area (Arden) of wood pasture, from the thirteenth century this comprised the deliberate preservation of woodland in Arden for cropping. It is also known that pollarding was used to prevent animals grazing the land. The Domesday Book indicates that 19% of Warwickshire was covered by woodland and that it was predominantly found in areas to the north of the county. Much of the woodland has now been cleared and the landscape character is predominantly agricultural across the Borough.
- 5.21. Today there are many mature hedgerow oaks, patches of ancient woodland and parks containing the remnants of wood pasture. The woodlands themselves range from 20th century plantations to species-rich ancient woodlands. Some of the woodlands contain important populations of lichens and fungi. Oak and ash wood with bracken, bramble and dog's mercury are also particularly distinctive.

#### Guidelines

- Individual oaks, veteran trees and ancient woodland should be preserved.
- New woodland planting should be compliant in design with the pattern and scale of the surrounding landscape.
- Broadleaved planting should be encouraged within new plantations and favour oak as the primary tree species.
- The removal of hedgerows, including those along footpaths, bridleways and woodland edges should be avoided and the management of hedgerows should be promoted.

## 6. Solihull Borough Landscape Character Areas

- 6.1. Following baseline and desktop studies, combined with field work and stakeholder consultation, the landscape characterisation process has revealed ten broad Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) can be identified across the Borough. The particular characteristics of these LCAs have been described in detail within the following section along with photographs and text identifying sensitivities and pressures within these areas. Guidelines for future management for perceivable landscape change are also included.
- 6.2. The full list of Landscape Character Areas are as follows:
- LCA 1 – Solihull Fringe
  - LCA 2 – Southern Countryside
  - LCA 3 – Knowle & Dorridge Fringe
  - LCA 4 – Rural Centre
  - LCA 5 – Balsall Common Eastern Fringe
  - LCA 6 – Eastern Fringe
  - LCA 7 – Northern Upland
  - LCA 8 – Blythe Lowland
  - LCA 9 – Motorway Corridor
  - LCA 10 – Urban Green Spaces
- 6.3. The areas have distinct patterns of landform, soils, geology, vegetation cover, land use, settlement and field pattern. However, a further tier of combined desktop and fieldwork followed by assessment and landscape characterisation has identified a collection of landscape character sub-areas across the Borough. These sub-areas display their own distinct pattern of character and local distinctness that enables them to be readily set apart from the larger LCAs within which they lie.
- 6.4. These sub areas have been identified within LCA 1 – Solihull Fringe, LCA 4 – Rural Centre and LCA 10 – Urban Green Spaces and a detailed review of their key landscape characteristics has been undertaken to provide additional sub-areas as follows:
- LCA 1:*
- Sub-Area 1A
  - Sub-Area 1B
- LCA 4:*
- Sub-Area 4A
  - Sub-Area 4B
  - Sub-Area 4C
  - Sub-Area 4D
- LCA 10:*
- Sub-Area 10A
  - Sub-Area 10B

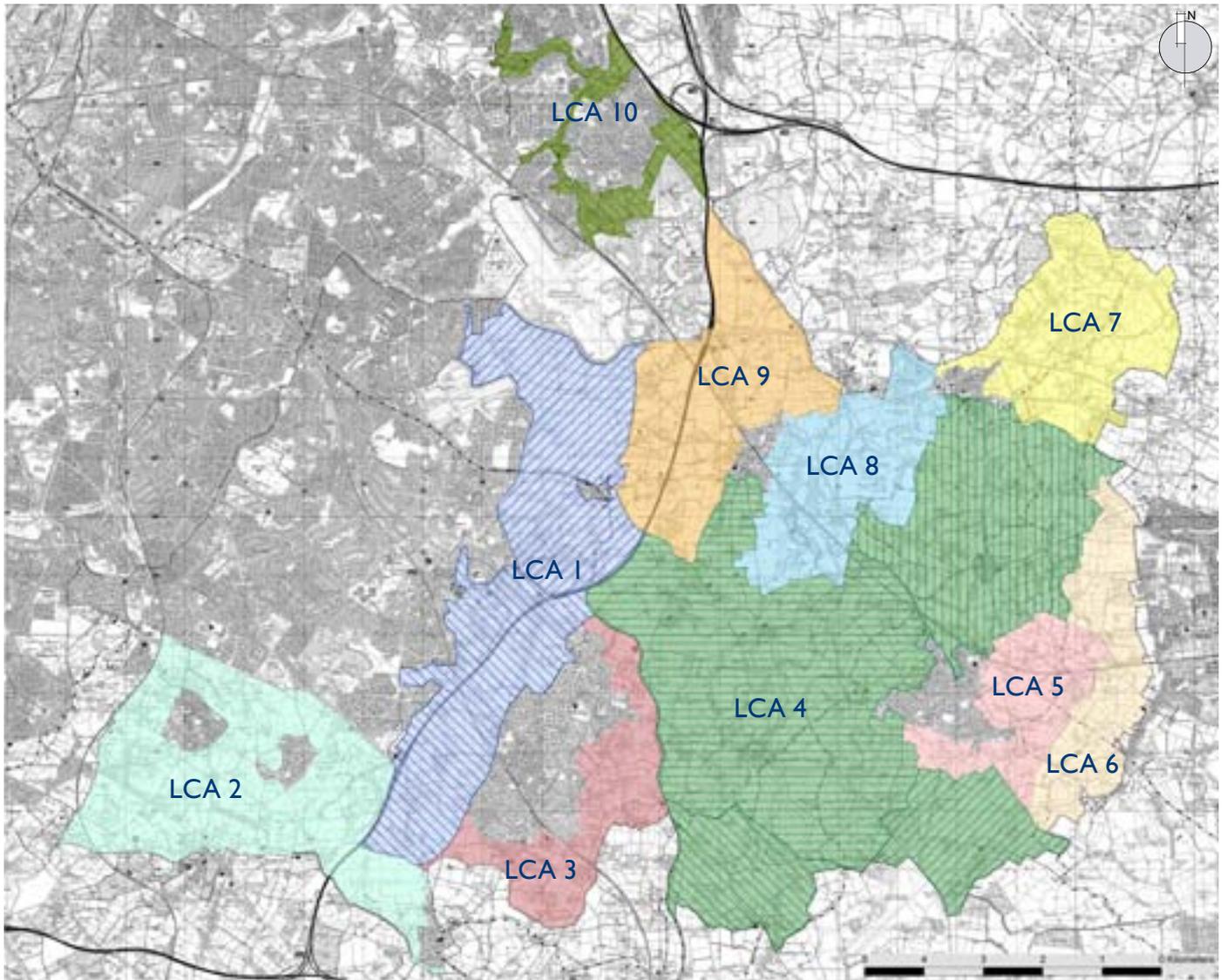
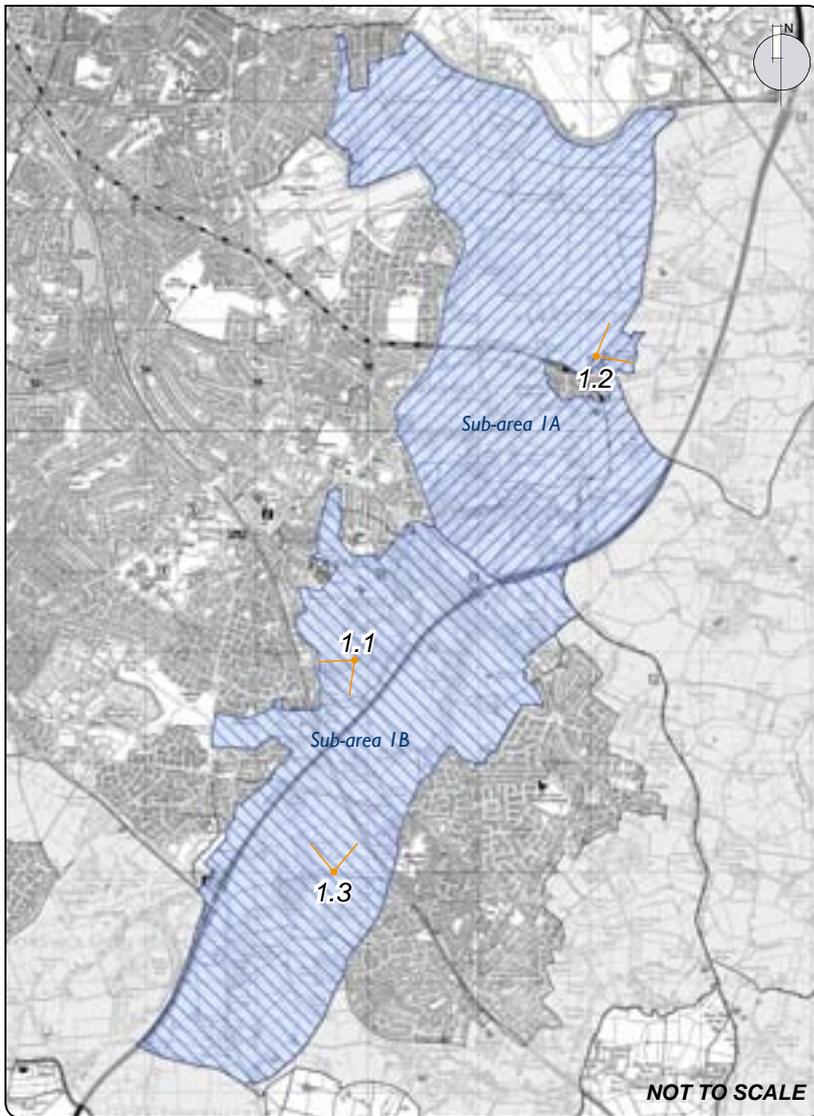


Figure 2: Solihull Borough Landscape Character Areas Map (Refer to Appendix D for a full-sized map.)



# LCA

## 1

### Solihull Fringe



**Photograph 1.1:**

Residential areas form part of the varied land use. The environment around Malvern & Brueton Park has a well wooded character.



**Photograph 1.2:**

Road and aeroplane noise is a constant detractor. The spire of St Peter's Church, Bickenhill is a frequent landmark in the distance in views from northern parts of this LCA.



**Photograph 1.3:**

Arable fields are also part of the varied land use. Field boundaries are in variable condition and poor in some areas particularly in the south and to the east of the M42. In many places traditional hedgerows have been replaced with post and wire fencing.

## Description:

This area covers just under 19km<sup>2</sup> at the eastern urban fringe of Solihull, where the settlement of Knowle and Dorridge lies to the east.

The landform across the area gently rises forming a northward facing slope extending from Birmingham International Airport towards the small settlement of Catherine-de-Barnes in the south. The mid southern extent of this area that stretches from the Grand Union Canal is characterised by the River Blythe SSSI, which has shaped a shallow valley along its course and where woodland and tree cover associated with the river valley is a key feature of the area.

Land use in this character area is influenced by the direct proximity of the urban edge to the open countryside, which exhibit contrasting fields patterns where strong hedgerow boundaries exist in the north in contrast to the more irregular pattern towards the south becoming interspersed by golf courses and ribbon development extending from the urban edge of Solihull and Dorridge. Within the M42 corridor and the airport area in the north, road and air traffic noise is a significant detractor to the tranquility of the area.

A diverse range of medium distant and short distant views are prevalent across this character area, where church spires from nearby settlements such as St Peter's Church in Bickenhill and St Alphege Church in Solihull form vertical features within the views across the area.

Pockets of ancient woodlands are characteristic of this character area, which are also designated Local Wildlife Sites such as Botts Coppice and Parlour Coppice. Woodland cover is a key feature of the area such that views throughout this character area are

generally typified by a backdrop of wooded land.

This character area has been further sub-divided into two sub-areas:

- Sub-Area LCA 1A; and
- Sub-Area LCA 1B.

## Key Characteristics:

### Geology, soils and drainage:

- Predominantly slowly permeable clayey soils, seasonally wet with impeded drainage. An area of permeable alluvial and glacial clays, sand and gravel deposits, naturally wet soils with shallow groundwater north of Dorridge.
- Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) of Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone solid geology.

### Landform and drainage pattern:

- Undulating landform ranging from 100m to 140m AOD.
- The Grand Union Canal and the River Blythe with its tributaries along with associated lakes, ponds and field ditches form the majority of the water network in this area. Apart from these, Low Brook and Hatchford Brook to the north also play an important role in the drainage pattern of the character area.
- The fords around Ravenshaw Hall are a unique feature and distinct to the character of this area.
- The Grand Union Canal and River Blythe are key features within the LCA and their setting has a great influence on the landscape character.

**Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife:**

- Varied land-use including arable and pastoral fields, parkland, deciduous and mixed woodland, agricultural land, residential areas, a number of golf courses and industrial areas.
- Irregular field pattern. Strong hedgerow structure within fields to the north of the character area, in contrast to the more irregular and weaker field boundaries including post and wire fencing mixed with hedgerows to the south and open boundaries to the east of the M42 corridor.
- Tree cover is generally limited to woodlands and hedgerows plus parkland trees east of Hampton Coppice and near Malvern & Brueton Park and east of the M42. A number of individual trees are also noted within fields.
- Bracken hedgebanks along the roads form a distinctive feature within the southern extent of the area and these features are also noticeable around the settlement of Catherine de Barnes.
- The landscape between Dorridge and M42 is particularly distinct with a strong hedgerow structure, field boundaries and woodlands.
- Strong tree-lined river corridors, however the pattern between the Half Moon Coppice and Sanderfield Wood section of the river is broken with scattered trees bordering the River Blythe.
- Brueton Park, along the western edge of Solihull near Solihull College, and Elmdon Manor in the north-west are designated Local Nature Reserves.
- Numerous Local Wildlife Sites scattered across the LCA including Castle Hill Farm Meadows, the largest Local Wildlife Site within the Borough.
- Several areas of ancient woodland are located within this area. These include Sanderfield Wood and Monkspath Wood, both being Local Wildlife Sites as well.

**Settlement, built environment and communications:**

- The main settlement is Catherine de Barnes, supplemented with linear development extending from Solihull and Dorridge. In addition, to these areas, there are several scattered farmsteads and manor houses most of which have been converted predominantly into residential use.
- The Grand Union Canal runs across the breadth of the LCA.
- An intricate network of footpaths (including the long distance trail known as the Grand Union Canal Walk) and roads criss-cross the area, although most follow an east-west alignment connecting Solihull with other settlements to the east.
- Evidence of historic features such as ridge and furrow; post medieval historic farmhouses, historic manor houses and halls; moated medieval sites; ancient woodland and assarted areas are noted within the area.
- Ravenshaw Hall with its associated fords and Old Berry Hall, both being Grade II\* listed buildings are landmark features within this LCA. The red bricked Longdon Hall sits in the far east of the LCA and is also Grade II\* listed.
- Street lamps, communication masts, telegraph poles and electricity pylons are noticeable throughout the character area.
- The M42 dominates as the north-south transportation corridor and also segregates the rural area to east from the west. The road from Catherine-de-Barnes to the A45 in the north is a relatively busy road and together with the major roads and the close proximity of the airport, road noise and air traffic noise is a detracting element particularly within the northern extent of the character area. The Chiltern Railway runs across the breadth of the LCA.

**Sensitivities and Pressures:**

- Neglect and potential loss of veteran trees and ancient woodland associated with development pressure.
- The straight edges of the M42 corridor are insensitive to the irregular field pattern of the area.
- Possible increased pressure for access to open countryside from edge of Solihull and Dorridge may impact upon the rural character of the area.
- Pressure for development close to the urban edge of Solihull and Dorridge as is evident on either side of the M42 south of the A41 intersection. It is further evident through the new Jaguar Land Rover works and distribution centre built off Damson Parkway.
- Landscape at the urban edge of Solihull and Dorridge is sensitive to loss of tree cover and is important to the rural setting of the settlement.
- Maintenance of public rights of way, which are sparsely distributed.
- Decline in frequency of hedgerow trees due to neglect and lack of management and replacement.
- The southern half of the area plays an important role in separating Solihull and Dorridge and is sensitive to development which would result in coalescence. The capacity of this area to accept development which would not result in coalescence is limited.
- Pressure for new housing in this attractive commuter area close to Solihull and the M42 corridor due to the easy access generates pressure along the corridor. Limited capacity of the corridor to accept development without impact upon character. Pressure particularly around the M42 and A41 junctions due to accessibility is likely to continue along with pressures for motorway services.
- Limited footpath network close to urban edge places walkers on narrow roads.
- Views across the area are enclosed in places for example around Gate Lane and Love Lace Avenue and extensive in others such as views across from the northern extent of the area towards the settlement of Catherine de Barnes.
- Noise from M42 corridor and the Birmingham International Airport impacts upon tranquillity of area.
- The M42 almost defines the eastern extent of the urban edge in the south of the area with only a thin buffer.

## Guidelines:

### **Aim: To protect the landscape pattern characteristic of the area.**

- Discourage planting along the River Blythe and Bickenhill Meadows that would affect the nature conservation and open river corridor landscape character of the area. Likewise protect the strong tree-lined river corridor at Sanderfield Wood, which is a vital link with the countryside from the urban area. Liaise with SMBC Parks or/and other suitable parties to ensure appropriate management for recreation and wildlife.
- Adhere to the requirements of the Solihull Woodland Strategy.
- Encourage reinstatement of river meadows along the valley floor to create a buffer zone between the river corridors and the M42.
- Encourage appropriate management to enhance and retain hedgerow structure and the planting of individual trees along field boundaries particularly in close proximity to the M42. Tree planting in the vicinity of Solihull is important to its setting and approaches.
- Resist loss of field boundaries to retain irregular field pattern to south of area. Discourage amalgamation of fields and promote awareness of the Hedgerow Regulations. Develop a hedgerow register for the character area.
- Promote proactive management of existing woodland and planting of new woodland to fit with landscape pattern in particular trees and woodland at the urban edge.
- Create links between existing woodland following hedgerows and enhance nature conservation assets and fit with Solihull Green Infrastructure Study.
- Encourage diversification of habitat conservation areas through appropriate landscape and ecology management plans. Opportunities to improve existing habitats and create new ones should be sought.
- Identify appropriate access points to the countryside and ensure that new facilities, signs and paths are low-key and respect landscape character.
- Encourage use of fencing in combination with hedges and a change in the trimming regime of hedgerows so that they remain high and bushy particularly along roadsides.
- Retain and enhance the strong hedgerow characteristic between Dorridge and M42.
- Where new buildings are required they should be located in association with existing farmsteads and settlement across the area and located so as not to require new access arrangements and subject to no adverse effect on the historic character.
- Strengthen existing woodland to enhance the character of the area and increase diversity of woodland edge with native planting.
- Retain the offset and overlapping nature of woodlands and belts of trees. Felling of copses should be carefully managed to retain the effect of woodland enclosure.
- Encourage the enhancement of tree cover through the planting of new woodlands and belts of trees.

### **Aim: To promote understanding of the heritage features in the area and their contribution to landscape character.**

- Identify heritage canal features of interest and develop strategy for their protection in partnership with Canal and River Trust or/and other appropriate parties.
- Resist any development that would degrade the character of the canal and river landscape and its historic value.
- There is potential to promote connections across the area particularly between the woodlands and parks via the network of footpaths which mostly runs east to west. Promote new studies in conjunction with County plans and provide interpretation of historic features across the area.
- Protect the historic landscape character setting of Catherine de Barnes and resist development that would impact upon the character of the listed buildings across the area.
- Protect veteran trees and ancient woodland and develop strategy for proactive management and programme of replacement. Encourage awareness of the value of veteran trees. New planting should be encouraged to diversify age structure.
- Protect the landscape setting of the River Blythe SSSI, which is a key feature of the area.
- Identify further historic and archaeological features suitable for active management and explore the potential to use as an educational resource.

### **Aim: To integrate the M42 corridor and other large scale development in the landscape and reduce its visual impact.**

- Support planting along the highway corridor of native species appropriate to the character of the area. Linear planting along its length should be avoided that would accentuate the roads presence in the landscape.
- Promote the management of roadside tree planting and links with woodland in the surrounding countryside to improve integration of the M42 corridor in the landscape.
- Where new development is promoted within the road corridor the design and layout will require detailed consideration to make links with the adjoining landscape setting, in particular landform and vegetation pattern.
- As land allocation progresses across the preferred sites, opportunities for structure planting within the sites in and amongst the development must be considered to break up the mass of building in the rural landscape with species of an appropriate scale.
- All new development proposals for large scale buildings require a landscape scheme as an integral part of a planning application to ensure the impact on landscape character is fully mitigated.
- Design at the urban edge requires a high quality approach and the use of appropriate materials to maintain the distinctiveness of the area.
- New development should avoid large scale encroachment to respect the scattered nature of settlement beyond the edge of Solihull.

### **Aim: To manage access for recreation at the urban edge:**

- Survey how walkers use the area to improve the safety and enjoyment of the countryside.
- Promote the enhancement of the footpath network and its contribution to landscape character and appreciation.
- Explore opportunities to improve public enjoyment of the area, through access agreements following appropriate routes, that would cause minimal disturbance.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- This LCA supports an attractive landscape with a 'sense of place' and good local connections, distinct landscape structures including strong tree cover, pockets of ancient woodland, river corridors and recreational space. It has a characteristic pattern creating a harmonious landscape. Although interrupted due to the M42 and other ribbon developments, the landscape is in very good condition with clear signs of positive management. There are a few detracting features including the electricity pylons, M42 and the dual carriageway within the landscape.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- The visibility in this LCA consists of generally medium to short distance views that are wide framed and deep, being upwards and horizontal in orientation. There are a number of long distant views out towards the landscape in the northern extent of the LCA with views towards the airport. The strong tree cover and woodland areas are a key visual feature in this character area and this forms the background for many of the views. The historic church spires of St Peter's Church in Bickenhill and St Alphege Church in Solihull are seen within the northern extent of the character area and are of notable interest. Prevention of coalescence is very important within the area and the surrounding countryside has a strong relationship with the existing built form.

**Table 1: Overall Landscape Sensitivity for LCA I – Solihull Fringe: Medium**

		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	<b>Medium</b>	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

## Landscape Value:

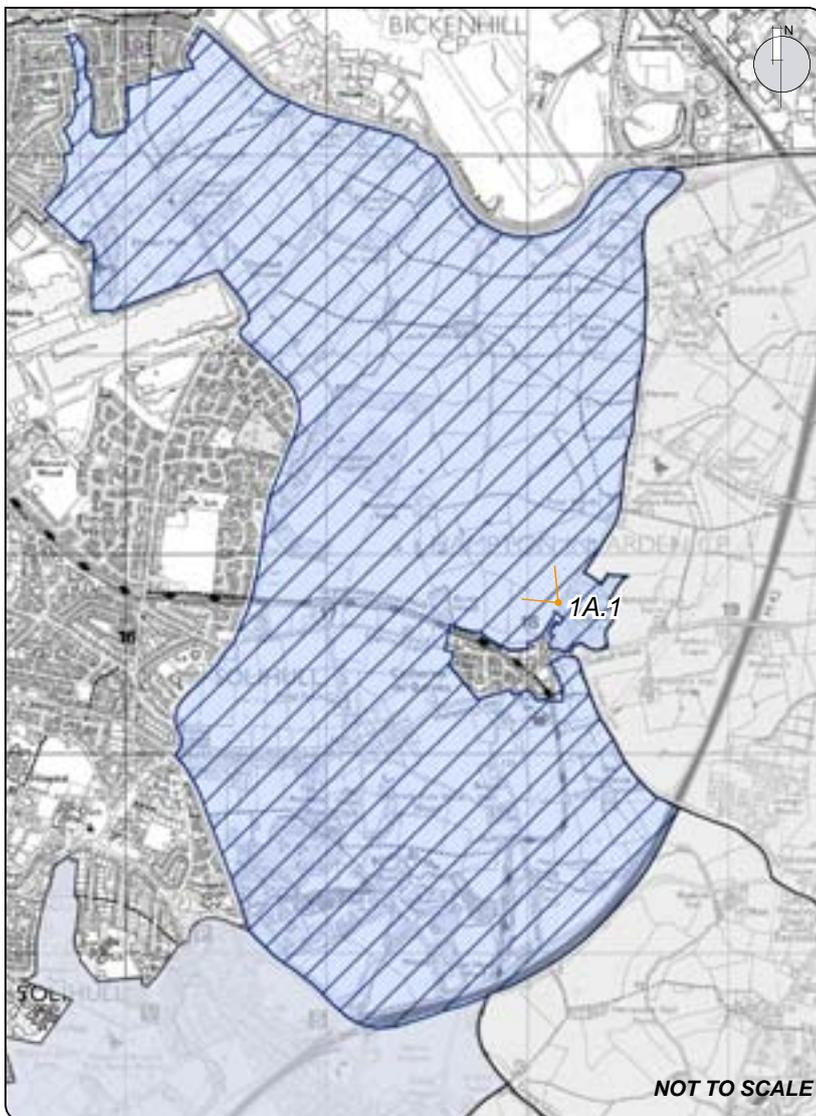
- The value of this character area is considered to be **Medium**.
- This is a locally distinctive landscape containing valued characteristics. There are several ancient woodlands within this area and Castle Hill Farm Meadows being the largest Local Wildlife Site in the Borough, in recognition of the quality of the grassland, present. Historic sites such as Ravenshaw Hall and Old Berry Hall and Local Nature Reserves including Brueton Park and Elmdon Manor add to the cultural and local value of the area. Value is increased by the presence of the long distance trail known as the Grand Union Canal Walk in this character area.

## Landscape Capacity:

- Consistent with current guidance, it is not possible to establish a definitive baseline sensitivity to change without having details of a given development proposal. However, for the purpose of this report a general assessment of the LCA's capacity to accommodate change has been undertaken. This should be used as a guide only, and will need to be re-assessed once details of any proposed development and site location are known.
- This LCA being of **Medium** overall landscape sensitivity and **Medium** landscape value, suggests that the LCA would typically have an overall **Low** landscape capacity to accommodate change.
- The LCA covers large areas of ancient woodland and designated Local Wildlife Sites, and is of high amenity and recreational value. The area also serves as an important access point to the countryside and a buffer region preventing coalescence between the settlements of Solihull and Knowle and Dorridge, preserving the overriding rural character of the area.
- Overall, this character area would be able to accommodate some areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness of the area. Any new developments should not result in the loss of the irreplaceable habitats or facilitate the merger of the settlements of Solihull with Knowle and Dorridge.

**Table 2: Landscape Capacity for LCA I – Solihull Fringe: Low**

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ None	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	<b>Low</b>	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



## Sub-Area IA



**Photograph IA.1:**  
 Medium to large scale fields, often with minimal field boundary vegetation. Woodland is a frequent backdrop to views..

### Description:

This sub-area is situated within the northern extent of LCA I: Solihull Fringe and comprises pastoral and arable fields, woodlands some of which are ancient, residential ribbon development, commercial and employment buildings, playing fields and various sports clubs. The sub-area is bound by Solihull urban edge to the west, the B438 and M42 to the east, A45 to the north and the A41 to the south. The sub-area provides access to the wider countryside for recreation and serves as a buffer to protect the merger of Solihull with Catherine-de-Barnes and Hampton in Arden further east.

The road network is limited within the northern extent of the sub-area. It is bordered by wide arterial roads, which are dominant in contrast to the secondary road network. The minor roads are generally narrow, tree lined and enclosed such as Field Lane and Berryhall Lane. There are a number of public footpaths and bridleways that cross the area including the Grand Union Canal Walk, a long distance trail. The River Blythe and the Grand Union Canal are key watercourses that contribute to the overall character of the sub-area.

### Key Characteristics:

- Medium to large scale fields of supporting both pastoral and arable use. Field boundaries vary from hedgerows to open division with post and wire fencing.
- Strong woodland and tree cover in the area that forms the backdrop in most views.
- A number of highly managed green spaces hosting a variety of sports clubs including football, rugby and rifle shooting.
- Ribbon development along Hampton Lane and Lugtrout Lane are the main concentrations of settlement in the sub-area with other scattered developments including converted farmsteads.
- Listed Buildings include Grade II\* Ravenshaw Hall and its associated fords make the area distinct.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of the sub-area is considered to be **Medium**.
- The sub-area has some attractive landscape features such as Elmdon Park, various woodlands, open fields and historic buildings. Detracting elements include communication masts, fly-tipping, incongruous metal fencing, electricity pylons and general road and air traffic noise. The landscape in this area is fragmented due to the strong urban influences, road network and varying land uses. Overall, the landscape is in fair condition. Some areas such as Lugtrout Lane would benefit from landscape enhancement and management intervention measures. Birmingham Airport Obstacle Limitation Surface (OLS) directly influences land management practices within the north eastern section of this LCA. Tree and hedgerow management/height reduction/vegetation removal has had a direct influence on the character of this sub-area within the vicinity of the runway

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of the sub-area is considered to be **Medium**.
- The visibility in the sub-area consists of generally medium to short distance views that are wide - framed and deep, being horizontal in orientation. There are a small number of long distant views encapsulating the spire of St. Peter's Church in Bickenhill and others where the airport infrastructure is visible. The strong tree cover forms a backdrop to most mid-distant views and the vegetation along the lanes provides a tunnelled view where trees overhang the highway, particularly towards the northern extent.

## Landscape Value:

- The value of the sub-area is considered to be **Medium**.
- This is a locally distinctive landscape containing valued characteristics. The ancient woodlands, manor houses, fords at Ravenshaw Hall, the Grand Union Canal provide cultural heritage asset to the area. Value is added to the sub-area by the presence of the Grand Union Canal Walk.

**Table 3: Overall Landscape Sensitivity for Sub-Area 1A: Medium**

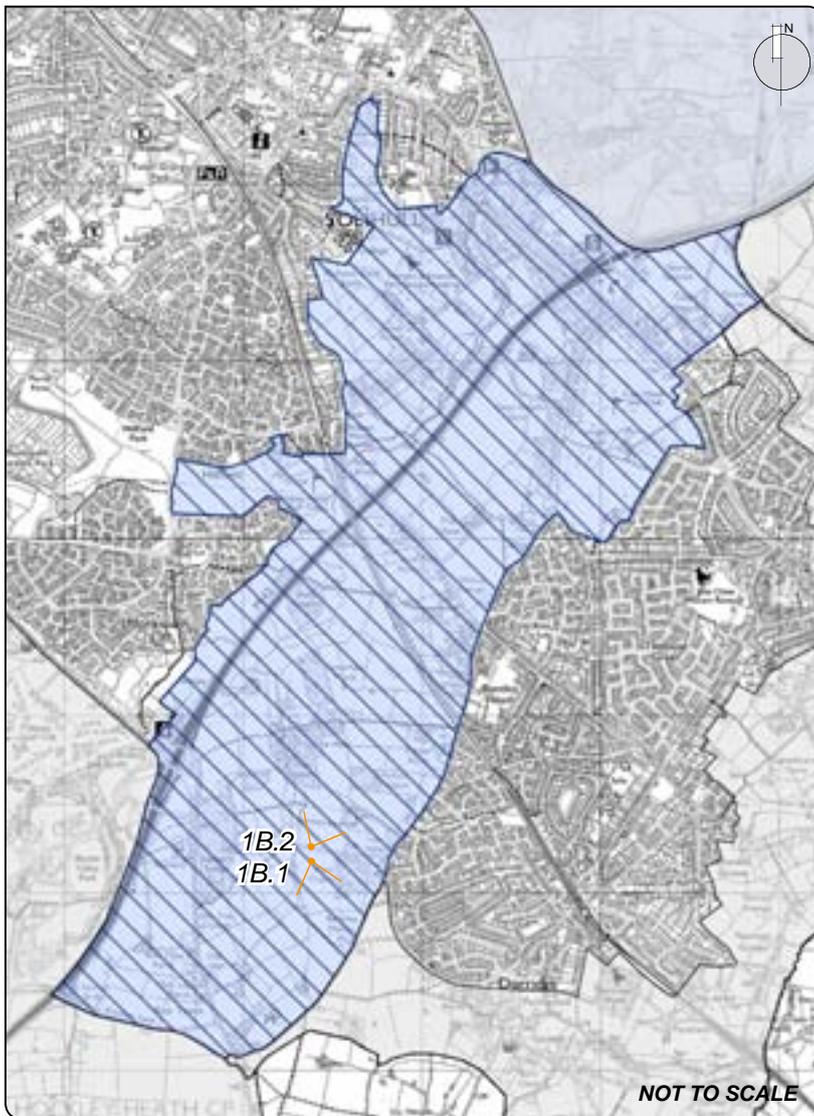
		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	<b>Medium</b>	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

## Landscape Capacity:

- The sub-area would typically have an overall **Low** landscape capacity to accommodate change.
- Overall, the sub-area would be able to accommodate some areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form and in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness of the area. Any new development should not result in the merger of Solihull and Catherine-de-Barnes or facilitate a detrimental change the setting of the historical environment. The ancient woodland and strong tree cover in this area should not be lost by means of new development.

**Table 4: Landscape Capacity for Sub-Area 1A: Low**

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ None	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	<b>Low</b>	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



## Sub-Area IB



**Photograph 1B.1:**  
 Medium to large scale fields, some containing large agricultural buildings.



**Photograph 1B.2:**  
 There is a good presence of hedgerow trees though these are in varying conditions.

### Description:

This sub-area is situated within the southern extent of LCA 1: Solihull Fringe. The area comprises a variety of land use and vegetation cover including farmland (pastoral and arable), transport corridors - M42, secondary roads and the Chiltern Railway line, residential ribbon development, parkland, woodland (some of which is ancient) and golf courses. However, despite the diversity, the sub-area has a strong rural character, particularly to the east of the M42 becoming more suburban in character to the west of the area.

A number of connecting roads radiate out of Solihull in a southerly direction towards Knowle and Dorridge and the M42, ribbon development is particularly noticeable. Warwick Road and Lady Byron Lane in particular support areas of ribbon development which reduces the open gap between Solihull and Dorridge. The public footpath network is abundant with good connections from Dorridge and Solihull to the outlying countryside, however there is limited north-south connectivity. The River Blythe SSSI and its associated tree cover is an important watercourse providing valuable biodiversity resource within the sub-area.

### Key Characteristics:

- Medium to large scale fields, some containing large agricultural buildings particularly within the southern extent of the area.
- Good hedgerow structure with hedgerow trees of varying condition. Some areas have bracken hedgerows as seen around Gate Lane.
- Pockets of coppiced woodlands are scattered across the sub-area.
- Northern extent has an extensive amount of ribbon development giving rise to a sub-urban feel.
- Noise from the motorway and general road traffic affects the tranquility in the sub-area.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of the sub-area is considered to be **Medium**.
- The sub-area has a number of attractive landscape features such as Malvern & Brueton Park, and Brueton Park Local Nature Reserve and various woodlands and open fields. Detracting elements include electricity pylons, communication masts, overhead cables, traffic noise and the large areas of residential development, which negatively impact on the rural character of the area. The landscape in the sub-area is interrupted due to the urban influences and transport infrastructure, however the condition of the landscape is considered to be good overall.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of the sub-area is considered to be **Medium**.
- The visibility in this LCA consists of generally medium to short distance views that are wide and contained, deep and shallow, being horizontal in orientation. St. Alphege's church spire is a key feature within the views from Widney Manor Road and should be protected. The strong woodland cover in this sub-area provides a dominant backdrop is most

views.

**Table 5: Overall Landscape Sensitivity for Sub-Area 1B: Medium**

		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

## Landscape Value:

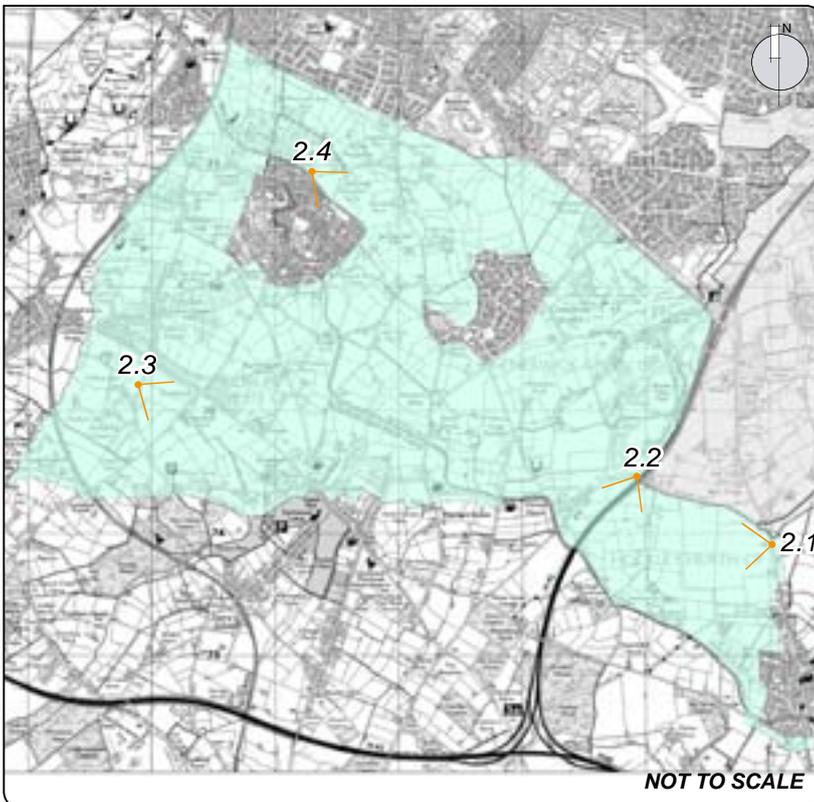
- The value of the sub-area is considered to be **Medium**.
- This is a locally distinctive landscape containing valued characteristics including the Brueton Park Local Nature Reserve, River Blythe, ancient woodlands and distinctive areas of attractive open countryside. The sub-area provides good amenity and recreational value via its various public footpaths and golf courses.

## Landscape Capacity:

- The sub-area would typically have an overall **Low** landscape capacity to accommodate change.
- Overall, the sub-area would be able to accommodate some areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form and in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness of the area. Any new development should not result in the merger of Solihull and Knowle and Dorridge or encourage further ribbon development which would destroy the overarching rural character of this sub-area.

**Table 6: Landscape Capacity for Sub-Area 1B: Low**

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ Negligible	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	Low	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



LCA  
**2**

**Southern  
Countryside**



**Photograph 2.1:**

The land is predominantly agricultural with poor boundary structure or open fields of medium to large size, particularly in the east.



**Photograph 2.2:**

The M42 motorway segregates this area into two parts.



**Photograph 2.3:**

Main settlements, including Tidbury Green, have a great influence on the character of the area acting as a gateway between the urban southern fringe of Solihull and the more rural south.

**Description:**

This area covers approximately 14km<sup>2</sup> to the south of the Shirley area of Solihull where the main settlements in the area are Dickens Heath, Cheswick Green and Hockley Heath.

The land gradually slopes down from the south west edge of Solihull towards the settlement of Cheswick Green with LCA 1 presiding to the east. The River Blythe along with its tributaries pass across this area and the River Cole skirts the western edge. Both of these river corridors provide good tree cover. The Stratford-upon-Avon Canal also passes diagonally across the area adding to overall landscape character and providing an important route for recreation within the area.

The narrow lanes, strong hedgerow structure lend an enclosed and intimate feeling to this area, that is particularly well perceived around Salter Street, south of Cheswick Green. This LCA is a largely rural area with active farms, horsiculture and scattered settlement pattern, where in contrast urban influences prevail near the urban edge of Solihull. Sub-urban influences are also present in and around Tidbury Green.

This character area provides a gateway from the southern fringe of the Solihull urban settlement to the more rural south. Despite the limited availability of public footpaths and bridleways across the area it remains accessible due to its geographical location close to Solihull and the other settlements of Dickens Heath, Cheswick Green and Hockley Heath.

**Key Characteristics:**

**Geology, soils and drainage:**

- Slowly permeable clayey soils, seasonally wet with impeded drainage.
- Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) of Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone solid geology.

**Landform and Drainage Pattern:**

- Undulating landform ranging from 130m to 150m AOD.
- The River Blythe SSSI along with its tributaries, including stream and field drains, pass across this area and the River Cole skirts along the western edge.
- The Stratford-upon-Avon Canal passes diagonally across the area.

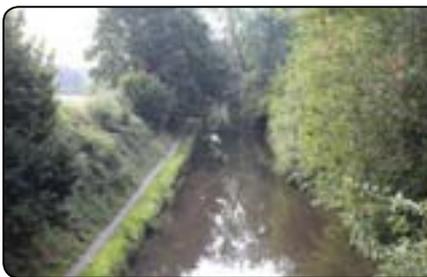
**Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife:**

- Irregular field pattern and sizes ranging from small to large field that are generally well enclosed.
- Land use is predominantly pastoral with some residential areas, parks and open space, sports fields and a golf course (Whitlock's End Golf Course).
- A reasonable amount of horsiculture and horse paddocks were also noted in this area along with associated overgrazing.
- Strong hedgerow boundary structure across majority of the area. The hedgerows with mature oaks are a key feature of this area.

### Settlement, built environment and communications:

- Areas with poor boundary structure with open field boundaries were noted among the larger fields within the eastern extent, south of Kineton Lane.
- Both the river corridors (Blythe and Cole) have good tree cover.
- Several Local Wildlife Sites are located in the area including Dickens Wood, an ancient woodland.
- Dickens Heath Country Park is an important asset to the area being a Principal Park, Local Nature Reserve and designated Local Wildlife Site.
- River Blythe Oxbow, situated north of Winterton Farm near River Blythe, is a Regionally Important Geological Site.
- The SSSIs within this LCA are the River Blythe and Clowes Wood & New Fallings Coppice. The majority of the latter lies outside the southern boundary of the Borough, however, the setting should be considered due to its close proximity to the LCA.

- The main settlements are Dickens Heath, Cheswick Green, Hockley Heath and Tidbury Green. Of these the first three are outside of the LCA, however due to the nature of their location they have a strong influence on the character area.
- There are a further few smaller settlements of Ilshaw Heath, Earlswood and Whitlock's End and scattered farms across the area.
- Several listed buildings within the area with most of them being concentrated in the central extent of the character area near Dickens Heath and Cheswick Green.
- Engine House, adjacent to Engine Pool, although not listed, is a historic building of local note and is a key feature of the area.
- Most of these listings comprise farmsteads and associated buildings with it.
- There are several roads and footpaths within this area connecting the outlying settlements to Solihull and the north. The M42 segregates the area into two parts.
- The narrow street structure with established mature hedgerow and associated trees, originally farm tracks now tarmacked, are a key feature of the area and lends to it an intimate and enclosed feeling.
- The Stratford-upon-Avon Canal cuts across the length of the area from east to west and provides a recreational route along its towpath. Overall, this is an aesthetically pleasing landscape feature and a valuable heritage asset to the area.



**Photograph 2.4:**

*The Stratford-upon-Avon Canal passes diagonally through the area and borders the northern edge of Dickens Heath.*

## Sensitivities and Pressures:

- Neglect and potential loss of tree cover through new development.
- Neglect of woodland management will decrease the long-term sustainability of tree cover.
- Possible increase pressure for access to open countryside from edge of Solihull and Dickens Heath may impact upon the rural character of the area.
- Pressure for development close to the urban edge of Solihull and Dickens Heath as is evident.
- Impact of the urban edge on rural character. The impact of encroachment can be seen along Dickens Heath Road when leaving Solihull towards Tidbury Green.
- Pressure of coalescence between the settlements particularly evident between Tidbury Green and Dickens Heath.
- The landscape around Salter Street contains many scattered buildings and has limited capacity to accept additional built development without detriment to landscape character through coalescence.
- Maintenance of public rights of way, which are few in number.
- Decline in frequency of hedgerow trees due to neglect and lack of replacement.
- Pressure for new housing in this attractive commuter area close to Solihull and the M42 corridor due to the easy access generates pressure along the corridor. Limited capacity of the corridor to accept development without impact upon character. Pressure particularly around the M42 due to accessibility is likely to continue along with pressures for motorway services.
- Limited footpath network close to urban edge places walkers on narrow and dangerous roads.
- Overgrazing by animals can give the appearance of over use and impacts upon biodiversity. Inappropriate fencing also impacts on rural character.
- Proximity of urban areas and their influence upon the River Blythe and River Cole corridors.
- Potential of farmstead sprawl with new large modern buildings that detract from the area.
- Noise from M42 corridor impacts upon tranquillity of area to south at Hockley Heath and Kineton Lane.
- Pressure for expansion of Blythe Valley Park.

## Guidelines:

### **Aim: To protect the landscape pattern characteristic of the area.**

- Discourage planting along the River Blythe and River Cole where the open river corridor landscape character of the area would be affected. Conversely protect the strong tree-lined river corridor at Hockley Heath.
- Promote opportunities to restore the River Blythe to a more favourable condition.
- Encourage reinstatement of river meadows along the valley floor to create a buffer zone between the river corridors and M42.
- Encourage appropriate management to retain strong hedgerow structure and the planting of individual trees along field boundaries particularly in and around Fulford Hall Estate. Tree planting in the vicinity of Tidbury Green and Dickens Heath is important to their setting and approaches.
- Resist coalescence of the built settlements to preserve the landscape character of the area.
- Resist loss of field boundaries to retain irregular field pattern. Discourage amalgamation of fields and promote awareness of the Hedgerow Regulations. Refer to Habitat Biodiversity Audit for detail.
- Promote proactive management of existing woodland and planting of new woodland to fit with landscape pattern.
- Adhere to the requirements of the Solihull Woodland Strategy.
- Encourage use of fencing with less intrusive materials in combination with hedges and follow traditional post and rail or post and wire design. Promote the positive management of roadside hedgerows.
- Where new buildings are required they should be located in association with existing farmsteads and settlement across the area and located so as not to require new access arrangements and subject to no adverse effect on historic character.
- Strengthen existing woodland to enhance the character of the area and increase diversity of woodland edge with native planting.
- Conserve pastoral character and identify opportunities for conversion of arable land back to pasture.
- Conserve the diversity of old permanent pastures, reseeded or ploughing must be avoided and tree/woodland planting is inappropriate in these areas.

### **Aim: To promote understanding of the heritage features in the area and their contribution to landscape character.**

- Identify heritage canal features of interest and develop strategy for their protection around bridge crossings at High Chimneys Farm.
- Resist any development that would risk the character of the canal landscape and its historic value particularly at crossings with River Blythe.
- There is potential to promote connections across the area via the intricate network of footpaths. Promote new studies and provide interpretation of historic features across the area.
- Protect the landscape setting of Dickens Heath and resist development that would further impact upon the character of the landscape between Solihull and Dickens Heath and Dickens Heath and Cheswick Green.
- Protect ancient woodland at Dickens Wood and follow management in line with Solihull Woodland Strategy. Encourage awareness. New planting should be encouraged to diversify age structure.
- Research small woodland blocks to establish whether they are Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland.
- Protect the landscape setting of the River Blythe and River Cole corridors, which are key features of the area, particularly around the canal bridges, Fulford and Salter Street.
- Identify further historic and archaeological features suitable for active management and explore the potential to use as an educational resource.

### **Aim: To manage access for recreation at the urban edge:**

- Survey how walkers use the area to improve the safety and enjoyment of the countryside particularly due to limited amount of footpaths in the southern area.
- Promote the enhancement of the footpath network and its contribution to landscape character and appreciation.
- Explore opportunities to improve public enjoyment of the area, through access agreements following appropriate routes, that would cause minimal disturbance.
- Explore opportunities to enhance the landscape setting of Whitlocks End Golf Course.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of this area is considered to be **Medium**.
- This is a landscape with a strong sense of local connection to the place, defining landscape features and a characteristic pattern within an enclosed and intimate landscape, creating a balanced tract of countryside in a good condition. The Stratford-upon-Avon Canal and the remnants of historical features are key positive features within this area. There are a few detracting features within the landscape including the M42 and communication masts.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of this area is considered to be **High**.
- The visibility in this LCA consist of generally medium to short distance views that are wide-framed with both a deep and shallow extent. Views are experienced both downwards and horizontal in orientation. There are a few long distant views out towards the landscape further south outside of the Borough boundary specifically towards the wooded backdrop of Clowes Wood & New Fallings Coppice. Overall, views across the area are enclosed in places for example at Lady Lane and extensive in others such as Hockley Heath. The woodland is a key visual feature in the area and forms the background for many of the views. Prevention of coalescence is very important.

**Table 7: Overall Sensitivity for LCA 2 – Southern Countryside: High**

		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

## Landscape Value:

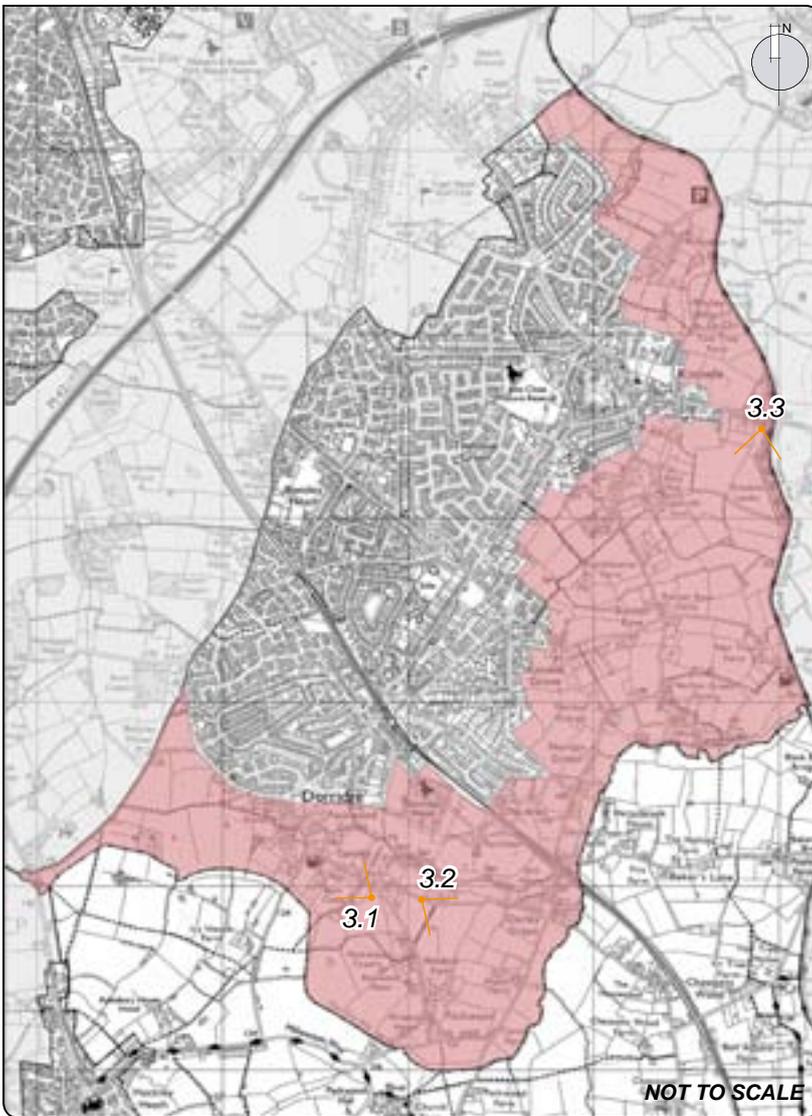
- The value of this character area is considered to be **Medium**.
- This is a locally distinctive landscape containing valued characteristics. Local Wildlife Sites and ancient woodlands are a key part of the rural landscape which impart an enclosed feeling that contributes towards the local distinctiveness of the area. Value is increased by the presence of the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal providing important cultural and historic association with the place.

## Landscape Capacity:

- As set out within the Methodology and in line with the current guidance, it is not possible to establish a definitive baseline sensitivity to change without having details of a given development proposal. However, for the purpose of this report a general assessment of the LCA's capacity to accommodate change has been undertaken. This should be used as a guide only, and will need to be re-assessed once details of any proposed development and site location are known.
- The LCA being of **High** overall landscape sensitivity and **Medium** landscape value, suggests that the LCA would typically have an overall **Very Low** landscape capacity to accommodate new development.
- The LCA is an attractive rural landscape with ancient woodlands and local wildlife sites where the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal provides good amenity and recreational value. The LCA also serves as an important access point to the countryside and a buffer region preventing coalescence between Solihull and Shirley with the smaller settlements to the south, preserving the largely rural and enclosed character of the area.
- Overall, the area is likely be able to accommodate only very restricted areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness of the area. Any new developments should not result in the loss of the irreplaceable habitats or facilitate the merger of the various settlements with each other and with Solihull to the north. Development should also respect and enhance the setting of the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal and retain the overall enclosed feeling of the LCA.

**Table 8: Landscape Capacity for LCA 2 – Southern Countryside: Very Low**

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ None	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	Low	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



Knowle & Dorridge Fringe

LCA 3



**Photograph 3.1:**  
Tree cover is present in hedgerows and pockets of woodland, particularly in the south of the area.



**Photograph 3.2:**  
There is a network of narrow, winding rural lanes often well enclosed by tall hedgerows and mature trees, such as at Mill Pool Lane.



**Photograph 3.3:**  
Knowle Hall Wharf, part of the Grand Union Canal which contains the area to the east. The towpath is part of a long distance trail.

**Description:**

This area covers approximately 5.8km<sup>2</sup> and includes the urban fringes of Knowle and Dorridge and rural areas to the south and east of the settlement. The LCA is contained by the Grand Union Canal which skirts along the east boundary of the area, Dorridge urban edge and Box Trees Road to the south-west of the area.

The land gently slopes down from west to east eventually falling towards the River Blythe in LCA 4. Purnell Brook, Cuttle Brook and Canal Feeder and their associated springs drain the area. These watercourses are well wooded and provide a distinctive characteristic within the landscape, specifically to the south of the LCA, which is perceived as being more enclosed and intimate.

Small blocks of woodland are scattered across the area, a number of these are ancient woodlands, Local Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves. The woodlands are a valuable asset and combined with the winding lanes, mature hedgerow trees and ditches/watercourses running across the fields they provide a rich complexity and strong structure to the landscape, which is a key characteristic of the area.

This area, being in close proximity to Knowle and Dorridge, shows signs of urban influence especially within the northern extent of the LCA on the approaches to the settlement of Knowle. A large proportion of the character area remains unspoilt and is distinctively rural in character with pastoral fields despite the close proximity of the urban edge. Although much of the historic environment has been developed over the years, remnants of the past are evident in the names of places. Grimshaw Hall provides a historical connection and is of great heritage value to the landscape character of the area.

The area provides a gateway to the countryside from the southern and eastern fringes of Dorridge. Public footpaths and bridleways are present and assist in connecting the settlements to the major roads and the Grand Union Canal Walk to the east.

**Key Characteristics:**

**Geology, soils and drainage:**

- Slowly permeable clayey soils, seasonally wet with impeded drainage.
- Bed rock Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) of Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone.

**Landform and Drainage Pattern:**

- The land gently slopes from a high point of 130m AOD down to 110m AOD from west to east eventually falling towards the River Blythe in LCA 4.
- Purnell Brook, Cuttle Brook and Canal Feeder along with their associated springs form the main drainage pattern within the LCA. These waterways and watercourse are a valuable landscape asset to the area.

**Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife:**

- Land use is varied with some residential development, individual farmsteads, horsiculture, parkland and agricultural land (mostly Grade 3 with some Grade 4).
- Urban influences are evident with managed green spaces, telegraph poles and manicured hedgerows specifically along Windmill Lane.
- Field pattern is varied with the north of the LCA consisting mostly of small to medium scale fields in contrast to the south, which generally comprises medium to large scale fields.
- Field boundaries follow the watercourses and are generally delineated by hedgerows, although a small number of open fields are also noted.
- Pockets of woodland are scattered across the area. Despite the larger concentration of woodland towards the south, woodland cover is not entirely absent from the north of the LCA as evident at Purnell Brooks Woodland.
- Well wooded water courses are an important feature in the area with willows being the dominate species. A small number of poplar shelterbelts are also noted.
- Mature hedgerow trees are a key feature within the area, although some have become tall and leggy through lack of management. A few individual scattered trees are also noted within the northern extent of the area where oak and ash are the two dominant species.
- Bracken hedgebanks are noted within the southern extent of the area.
- A number of Local Wildlife Sites are located within the area including three potential ancient woodlands: Dorridge Wood, Purnell Brooks Woodland and woodland bordering Box Tree Road.
- Darley Brook Meadows is a Local Wildlife Site of note, comprising a large area of meadow and woodland.
- Dorridge Wood, located at the southern edge of Dorridge adjoining the railway line is designated as a Local Nature Reserve.
- Dorridge Park is the only Principal Park within the area.

**Settlement, built environment and communications:**

- This LCA, being adjacent to the settlement of Knowle and Dorridge, has no other major settlements within it apart from smaller residences along the roads and individual farmsteads.
- Large individual residential properties with associated gardens/ garden style ornamental planting are also present.
- Most built form in the area consists of red brick and/or render with tiled roofs. Timber and brick buildings are present along Warwick Road and Norton Green Lane to the east of the LCA.
- There are no conservation areas within this LCA, however it lies in very close proximity to Knowle Conservation Area and therefore forms part of its setting in the northern extent of the LCA.
- Most of the listed buildings are concentrated along Kenilworth Road, although there are a number others scattered across the area such as Grove Farmhouse to the north, Mill Pool Cottage and Darley Mill House to the south, some of these are indicators of the small scale industrial past.
- Grimshaw Hall, a 16th century manor, is a Grade I listed building in the north of the area which, along with its parkland landscape, is a key historical feature of the landscape.
- The Chilterns Railway adds to the fragmentation of the area dividing the LCA into a northern and southern extent.
- Single track roads and winding lanes are characteristic of the area, some of which follow the water courses such as Mill House Lane which contributes to the distinct character of the area that evokes a strong sense of isolation and tranquillity relative to the northern extent of the LCA.
- A number of short sections of public footpaths are present within the LCA connecting the settlements to the major roads and Grand Union Canal Walk (long distance trail), which skirts along the eastern boundary of the area.
- The Grand Union Canal forms the eastern boundary of the LCA and is also used for mooring specifically in close proximity to Knowle.

**Sensitivities and Pressures:**

- Possible increase pressure for access to open countryside from edge of Knowle and Dorridge may impact upon the rural character of the area.
- Pressure for development close to the urban edge of Knowle and Dorridge. Further development is likely to result in encroachment into the rural area as evident at the edge of Knowle.
- Desire for new housing in this attractive commuter area close to Solihull and the M42 due to the easy access generates pressure along the motorway corridor. Limited capacity of the motorway corridor to accept development without impact upon character.
- Pressure for conversion of farm buildings into residences.
- Limited footpath network close to urban edge places walkers on narrow and dangerous roads.
- Overgrazing of land by horses gives the appearance of over use, degraded landscape and impacts upon biodiversity. Inappropriate fencing also impacts on rural character.
- The landscape to the south and around Cuttle Brook contains many scattered buildings and has limited capacity to accept additional built development without detriment to landscape character through coalescence.
- Neglect of field barns and vernacular buildings is impacting upon landscape character.

## Guidelines:

### **Aim: Preservation of Landscape Pattern**

- Discourage planting along the Cuttle Brook that would affect the nature conservation and river corridor landscape character of the area.
- Encourage reinstatement of water meadows along the valley floor to create a buffer zone between Cuttle Brook river corridor and southern edge of Dorridge.
- Encourage appropriate management to retain strong hedgerow structure and the planting of individual trees along field boundaries particularly in northern and central extents of the area. Tree planting in the vicinity of Dorridge is important to its setting and approaches.
- Resist loss of field boundaries to retain irregular field pattern to south of the LCA. Discourage amalgamation of fields and promote awareness of the Hedgerow Regulations. Refer to Habitat Biodiversity Audit for detail.
- Promote proactive management of existing woodland and the planting of new woodland to fit with landscape pattern in particular trees and woodland at the urban edge.
- Identify appropriate access points to the countryside and ensure that new facilities, signs and paths are low-key and respect landscape character.
- Encourage use of fencing with less intrusive materials in combination with hedges and follow traditional post and rail or post and wire design. Promote positive management of roadside hedgerows.
- Conserve pastoral character and identify opportunities for conversion of arable land back to grazing land.
- Conserve the diversity of old permanent pastures. Reseeding or ploughing must be avoided and tree/woodland planting is inappropriate in these areas.

### **Aim: To promote understanding of the heritage features in the area and their contribution to landscape character.**

- Identify heritage canal features of interest and develop strategy for their protection particularly around the northern and central extents of the LCA.
- Resist any development that would risk the character of the canal landscape and its historic value. Any new development in the vicinity of the canal needs to preserve and enhance its setting.
- Promote the use of high quality materials around the canal network to assist with improving its legibility and integration with its historic landscape setting.
- Promote connections across the area via the intricate network of footpaths. Promote new studies and provide interpretation of historic features in the landscape.
- Protect the landscape setting of Grimshaw Hall and resist development that would impact upon the character of the scattered farmsteads, manor houses and listed buildings across the area.
- Protect ancient woodland and follow management guidance in line with the Solihull Woodland Strategy. New planting should be encouraged to diversify age structure of tree stock.
- Research small woodland blocks to establish whether they are Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland.
- Protect the landscape setting of the Cuttle Brook and Mill Pool Lane, which are key features of the area.
- Identify further historic and archaeological features suitable for scheduling and explore the potential to use as an educational resource.

### **Aim: To manage access for recreation at the urban edge:**

- Survey how walkers use the area to improve the safety and enjoyment of the countryside particularly around Dorridge urban edge.
- Promote the enhancement of the footpath network and its contribution to landscape character and appreciation.
- Explore opportunities to improve public enjoyment of the area, through access agreements following appropriate routes, that would cause minimal disturbance.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- This is a landscape with a strong sense of local connection to the place, defining landscape features and a characteristic pattern including the watercourses and associated willow planting, bracken hedgebanks, creating a balanced landscape in a good to fair condition. The single track roads and winding lanes enhance rural character of the area and the pastoral character in some parts add to local distinctiveness. There are a few detracting features within the landscape including poor legibility of the canal and some of the sub-urban influences. Access to public footpaths and bridleways is limited.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Low**.
- The general visibility in this LCA is contained, short distance and low level where small scale fields and watercourses add intimacy and close down views across the area. The urban interface with Dorridge is well screened, although some views of the built form play a minor role in terms of visual coalescence in some parts of the character area.

**Table 9: Overall Sensitivity for LCA 3 – Knowle & Dorridge Fringe: Medium**

		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	<b>Medium</b>	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

## Landscape Value:

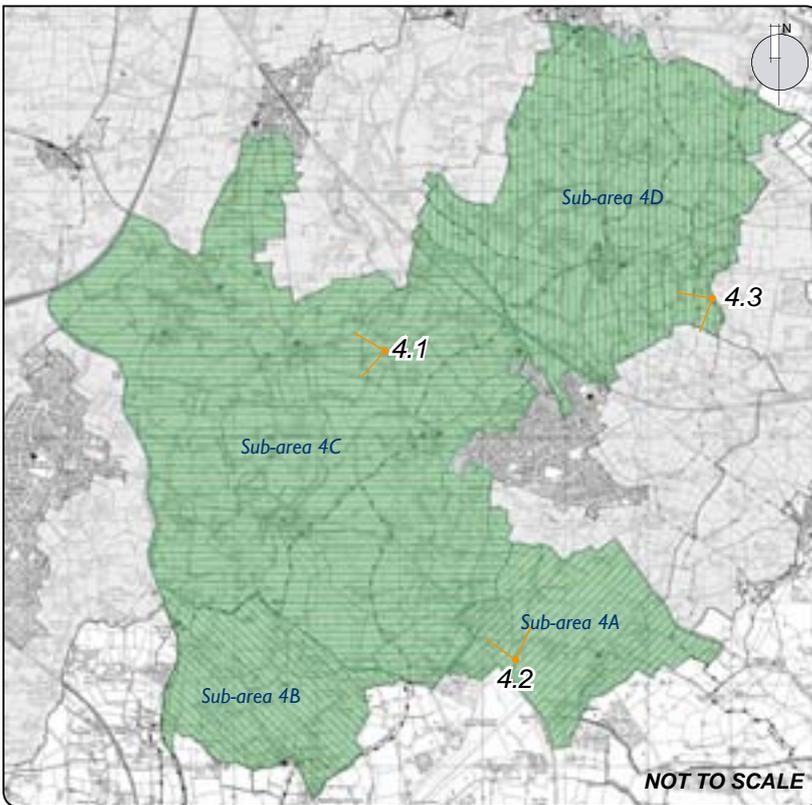
- The value of this character area is considered to be **Medium**.
- This is a locally distinctive landscape containing valued characteristics. The wooded watercourses along with the ancient woodlands are key to the local distinctiveness. Historic sites such as Grimshaw Hall and the Grand Union Canal adds to the cultural and local value of the area. Value is increased by the presence of the long distance trail at the Grand Union Canal Walk within this character area.

## Landscape Capacity:

- As set out within the Methodology and in line with the current guidance, it is not possible to establish a definitive baseline sensitivity to change without having details of a given development proposal. However, for the purpose of this report a general assessment of the LCA's capacity to accommodate change has been undertaken. This should be used as a guide only, and will need to be re-assessed once details of any proposed development and site location are known.
- This LCA being of **Medium** overall landscape sensitivity and **Medium** landscape value, suggests that the LCA would typically have an overall **Low** landscape capacity to accommodate new development.
- The LCA is a largely rural landscape with some urban influences and distinct watercourses with pastoral fields. The Grand Union Canal is a natural boundary to the area and provides good recreational value.
- Overall, this area is likely to be able to accommodate small areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness. Any new development should not result in the loss of the irreplaceable habitats or destroy the setting of the Grand Union Canal and Knowle Conservation Area.

**Table 10: Landscape Capacity for LCA 3 – Knowle & Dorridge Fringe: Low**

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ None	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	<b>Low</b>	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



# LCA 4

## Rural Centre



**Photograph 4.1:**  
Historic settlements have a distinctively intimate and well conserved feel. There are many attractive historic buildings within Conservation Areas and scattered throughout the rural landscape.



**Photograph 4.2:**  
Whilst trees are frequently a feature of field boundaries, hedgerows are often sparse.



**Photograph 4.3:**  
Land use is predominantly agricultural, generally with medium to large sized fields and a variable pattern. Electricity pylons are visible particularly to southern and western areas.

### Description:

This is a large area covering approximately 42km<sup>2</sup> and is within the rural heartland of Solihull.

It is an active rural agricultural landscape with arable and pastoral fields that support animal grazing.

Historically important nucleated settlements centred around road junctions are noticeable such as Temple Balsall and Berkswell. Other linear development such as Chadwick End and Barston are among the many smaller settlements prevalent in the wider countryside. Watercourses include the River Blythe SSSI, which forms an important feature within the area. This LCA is remote from larger areas of population giving a generally tranquil and unspoilt open character to the landscape.

The north-eastern extent of the character area adjoining LCA 8 is safeguarded as a mineral search area and the north-eastern and south-eastern extent of the LCA are also safeguarded as an area for search for coal. Mid-distance views with an open character and generally with a wooded backdrop are commonly experienced across this character area. The Conservation Areas play an important role within this LCA and their wider settings as an important characteristic that should be protected. The rural character of this LCA is a key element that requires protection and enhancement.

This character area has been further divided into four sub-areas comprising:

- Sub-Area LCA 4A;
- Sub-Area LCA 4B;
- Sub-Area LCA 4C; and
- Sub-Area LCA 4D.

### Key Characteristics:

#### Geology, soils and drainage:

- Largely slowly permeable clayey soils, seasonally wet with impeded drainage.
- The central section of the LCA comprises permeable alluvial and glacial clays, sand and gravel deposits, naturally wet soils with high groundwater in contrast to the western section, which comprises freely draining sands and gravels.
- Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) - Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone solid geology for the majority of the LCA, including the Wilmcote Limestone and Saltford Shale Member north of Knowle.
- Warwickshire Group of Siltstone and Sandstone with Subordinate Mudstone solid geology covers the north-eastern extent of the LCA.

#### Landform and Drainage Pattern:

- The land falls from the east to the west towards River Blythe and then gently rises up towards the west with landform generally ranging from 90m to 140m AOD.
- The River Blythe and its associated tributaries are a key feature within the area. Cuttle Brook, Long Brook and several pools, ditches and springs also contribute towards the drainage pattern of this LCA.
- The Grand Union Canal forms the western boundary of the character area.

**Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife:**

- Area is generally rural with agriculture (mix of arable and pastoral) being the predominant use. Residential development is scattered across this area with a number of rural farm businesses.
- Field sizes vary, although they are generally small to medium scale with larger fields prevailing to the east of Temple Balsall. Field patterns with a more regular pattern can be found to the south-eastern extent of the LCA.
- Field boundaries are diverse and include hedgerows of varying condition.
- Thick hedgerows occur often with bracken and mature oaks present.
- Pockets of woodland including plantations are present across the area, which are generally found in close proximity to the settlements and river corridors. Larger areas of woodland are more noticeable to the east of the A452 and Frogmore Wood to the south is a prominent feature in the landscape.
- Clusters of veteran trees occur to the west of Temple Balsall near Springfield House and the River Blythe with a further two areas located in the north-eastern extent of the LCA within the Berkswell Conservation Area.
- Tree cover is mostly limited to hedgerows, although the river corridor is well vegetated with the occasional individual field trees, which are a noticeable feature in the landscape.
- A number of Local Wildlife Sites are scattered across the LCA. Larger sites are concentrated within the southern extent of the area and some of these sites support ancient woodlands.
- Lavender Hall Park is a Local Nature Reserve as well as a Principal Park located near Balsall Common.
- SSSIs within this area include the River Blythe and Berkswell Marsh.

**Settlement, built environment and communications:**

- The two main settlements are Temple Balsall in the centre and Berkswell in the north-east with smaller settlements of Walsal End to the north-west and Barston to the north. All four settlements are located within Conservation Areas. There are a small number of smaller linear settlements, including Chadwick End and Fen End, and several scattered farmsteads.
- Listed Buildings are generally present within the Conservation Areas along with a number concentrated in the southern extent of the LCA. Smaller groupings of Listed Buildings, mostly farmhouses, are also situated around Magpie Lane and a further group are concentrated in the northern extent of the character area.
- There are four Scheduled Monuments including two within the Berkswell and Barston Conservation Areas, a third, Preceptory at Temple Balsall, and a fourth comprising the Moated site at Eastcote Hall.
- The A4141 and the A452 are the principle roads within the character area, which are linked by several minor roads connecting the various smaller settlements. The M42 forms part of the western boundary of the character area.
- The railway line runs in close proximity to the A452 creating a transport corridor in an otherwise rural setting.
- Several public footpaths and bridleways traverse the area connecting the three long distance trails comprising the Heart of England Way, Millennium Way and Coventry Way and providing good access to the wider countryside. The Grand Union Canal Walk forms the western boundary of the character area.
- Electricity pylons are visible within the southern and western extent of the character area. Communication masts and telegraph poles also lend vertical elements to the landscape within this LCA.

**Sensitivities and Pressures:**

- Neglect and potential loss of woodland.
- Pressure for development close to the edge of Balsall Common.
- Maintenance of public rights of way.
- Loss of biodiversity through intensive farming and land management.
- Overgrazing and trampling of land by horses which give the appearance of over use, degraded landscape and impacts upon biodiversity. Inappropriate fencing also impacts on rural character.
- Proximity of urban areas and their influence upon the River Blythe Corridor.
- Potential of farmstead sprawl with new large modern buildings that detract from the area.
- Noise from M42 corridor in the north west of the area.

## Guidelines:

### ***Aim: To protect the landscape pattern characteristic of the area.***

- Encourage new planting within the railway line corridor to link with existing planting.
- Adhere to the requirements of the Solihull Woodland Strategy.
- Discourage planting along the River Blythe that would affect the nature conservation and open river corridor landscape character of the area.
- Encourage reinstatement of river meadows along the valley floor to create a buffer zone between the river corridors and intensive farming practices.
- Encourage appropriate management to retain strong hedgerow structure and the planting of individual trees along field boundaries
- Encourage active management of the River Blythe and Berkswell Marsh reserves and other habitat conservation areas.
- Strengthen existing woodland to enhance the character of the area and increase diversity of woodland edge with native planting.
- Encourage the enhancement of tree cover through the planting of new woodlands and belts of trees.
- Conserve pastoral character and identify opportunities for conversion of arable land back to pasture. Reseeding or ploughing must be avoided and tree/woodland planting is inappropriate in these areas.

### ***Aim: To promote understanding of the heritage features in the area and their contribution to landscape character.***

- There is potential to promote connections across the area via the intricate network of footpaths. Promote new studies and provide interpretation of historic features across the area.
- Protect woodland and develop a strategy for proactive management in line with the Solihull Woodland Strategy. New planting should be encouraged to diversify age structure.
- Protect the landscape setting of the River Blythe, which is a key feature of the area.
- Identify further historic and archaeological features suitable for active management and explore the potential to use as an educational resource.

### ***Aim: To manage access for recreation at the urban edge:***

- Promote the enhancement of the footpath network and its contribution to landscape character and appreciation.
- Explore opportunities to improve public enjoyment of the area through access agreements, following appropriate routes that would cause minimal disturbance.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- This landscape is attractive in places and is largely rural with notable landscape features and a characteristic field pattern that is unified across the area. The landscape condition varies between very good to fair. There are a small number of detracting elements including electricity pylons, overhead cables and overgrazing by animals.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- The general visibility within this LCA consists of medium to short distance views that are framed and wide, often deep and horizontal in elevation. Strong hedgerows and tree cover prevail along with the River Blythe creating visual interest. There is a strong relationship between the open countryside and the adjoining urban areas.

**Table 11: Overall Sensitivity for LCA 4 – Rural Centre: Medium**

		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	<b>Medium</b>	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

## Landscape Value:

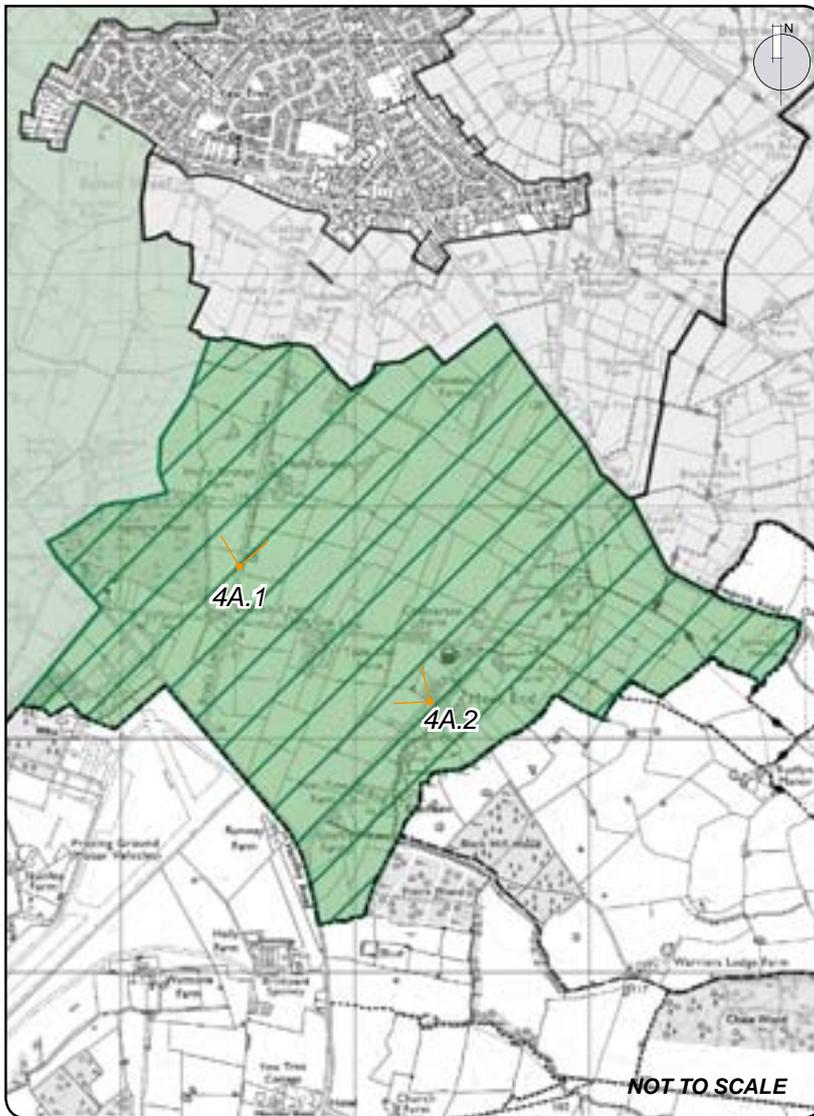
- The value of this character area is considered to be **Medium**.
- This area features Conservation Areas and their settings play an important role within the wider landscape and the boundaries of the settlements. It is the rural core of the Borough providing access to the countryside. The value of the area is further enhanced by the presence of several long distance trails and good footpath and bridleway connections.

## Landscape Capacity:

- Consistent with current guidance, it is not possible to establish a definitive baseline sensitivity to change without having details of a given development proposal. However, for the purpose of this report a general assessment of the LCA's capacity to accommodate change has been undertaken. This should be used as a guide only, and will need to be re-assessed once details of any proposed development and site location are known.
- This LCA being of *Medium* overall landscape sensitivity and *Medium* landscape value, suggests that the LCA would typically have an overall **Low** landscape capacity to accommodate change.
- The LCA covers a large part of the Borough's countryside. It comprises designated Local Wildlife Sites and ancient woodlands. The area overall is of high amenity and recreational value with the presence of the three long distance trails and is inherently rural in character with a small number of settlements (loosely scattered throughout the area) that tie in with the rural landscape in general.
- Overall, this character area would be able to accommodate some areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness of the area. Any new developments should not result in the loss of the irreplaceable habitats or harm the intrinsically rural character of the area.

**Table 12: Landscape Capacity for LCA 4 – Rural Centre: Low**

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ None	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	<b>Low</b>	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



## Sub-Area 4A



**Photograph 4A.1:**

Roads are linear and straight and are relatively wide and tree-lined often forming tunnelled views.



**Photograph 4A.2:**

Agricultural land with wooded backgrounds and strong hedgerow structure are characteristic of this sub-area.

### Description:

This sub-area is situated within the south-eastern part of LCA 4: Rural Centre, where the majority of the eastern extent of the area is designated as an area for search for coal. The area is distinguished by its straight linear roads and regular field pattern. The area also displays an overarching characteristic of being inherently rural displaying a combination of arable and pastoral land.

New developments seem to be a constant feature within the area with several areas showing new construction activity in progress where the construction noise and site activity is disruptive on the tranquil nature of the area.

The footpath and bridleway network is limited to the eastern and south-eastern extent of the sub-area. Linear development along Meer End Road is the main settlement within the area which is supplemented by scattered development including commercial/employment use and some ribbon development along the roads.

### Key Characteristics:

- Medium to large sized fields within the central part and small scale fields skirting the edges of the area. The fields display a regular pattern, which is a key characteristic of the sub-area. Both arable and pastoral fields are present, along with horsiculture.
- Presence of strong hedgerow structure forming the field boundaries.
- Linear, straight roads, which are generally wide and tree-lined with mature oaks, at times creating a tunnel effect due to the overhanging vegetation within areas such as Holly Lane.
- Field ditches run alongside the roads and poplar shelter belts are typical along with individual field trees and tree clumps.
- Urban influences are evident including allotments and 20th C. brick houses are bordered by well-trimmed hedges particularly along Meer End Road. Playing fields and recreation grounds are also a common feature across the area.
- Construction noise and movement of associated machinery is evident across the area.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of the sub-area is considered to be **Medium**.
- The sub-area has a clear legibility with its grid pattern of straight roads. This is a mixed area with active farms, pastoral and arable land and industry and residential settlements, which displays obvious landscape features such as a regular field pattern with a strong hedge structure and ditches and mature tree lined roads. The landscape is sometimes interrupted by the new built form and construction activity and commercial/employment uses. The landscape is generally in good condition, however, there are some detractors in the area including electricity pylons, construction noise and the impacts of the road network connecting to Balsall Common.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of the sub-area is considered to be **Medium**.
- The visibility in the sub-area consists of generally medium distance views that are medium level, wide-framed, deep and horizontal and upward in orientation. There are some views across to the Frogmore Wood from the east.

**Table 13: Overall Sensitivity for Sub-Area 4A: Medium**

		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	<b>Medium</b>	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

## Landscape Value:

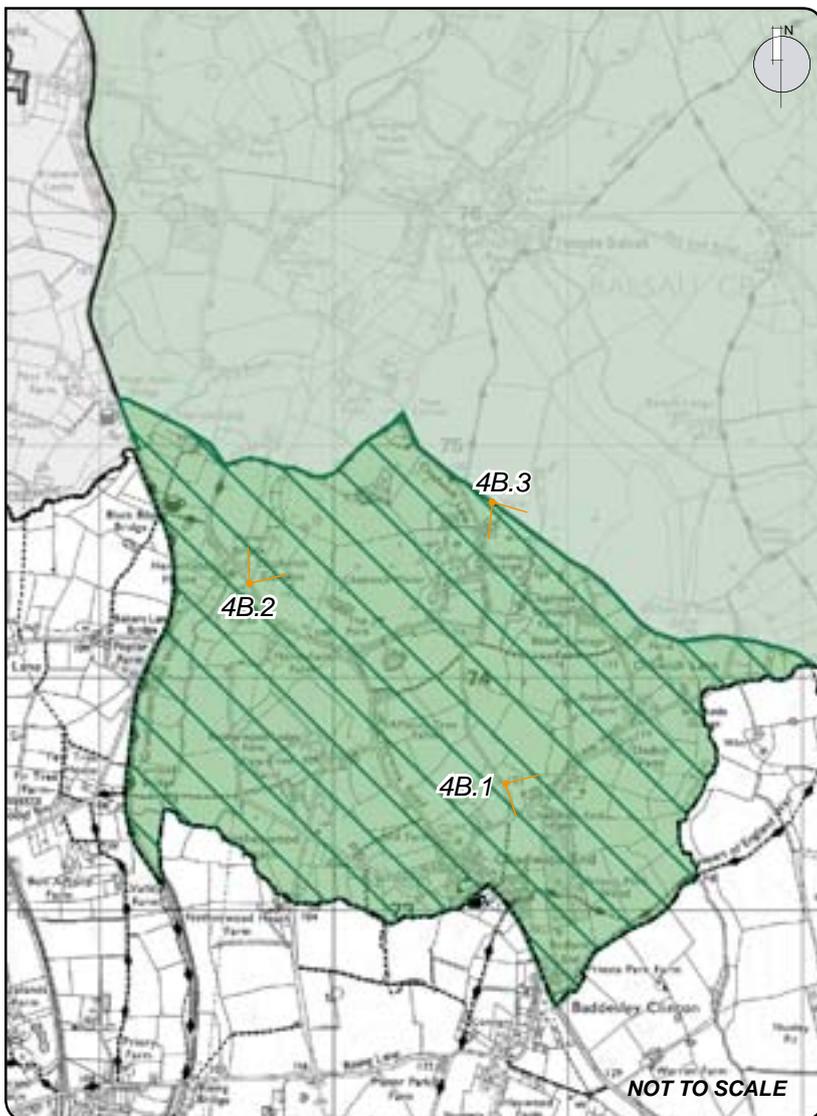
- The value of the sub-area is considered to be **Low**.
- Although the sub-area has some degree of local distinctiveness the multitude of uses including commercial/employment activity is detractor. A very small part of the long distance trail (Millennium Way), passes through the eastern edge of the area, but is limited in terms of its geographical presence.

## Landscape Capacity:

- The sub-area would typically have an overall **Low** landscape capacity to accommodate change.
- Overall, the sub-area would be able to accommodate some areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness. Any new development should be in keeping and sensitive to the rural character of the area.

**Table 14: Landscape Capacity for Sub-Area 4A: Low**

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ Negligible	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	Low	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	<b>Low</b>	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



## Sub-Area 4B



**Photograph 4B.1:**  
Brick and render buildings are a key characteristic, alongside small agricultural fields.



**Photograph 4B.2:**  
Mature trees are visible within hedgerows and in fields in the sub-area.



**Photograph 4B.3:**  
Narrow, winding roads with grass verges, and overhanging trees are a common and distinctive sight within the sub-area.

### Description:

This sub-area is situated within the southern extent of LCA 4: Rural Centre. The main land use comprises pastoral fields, the settlement of Chadwick End along with individual scattered properties including farmsteads and their associated agricultural buildings. The sub-area is characterised by narrow winding roads with high bordering vegetation that provides a sense of enclosure in the landscape. Tranquillity is also a key feature of the area.

The Grand Union Canal and Grand Union Canal Walk (long distance trail), forms the western boundary of the sub-area and the Heart of England Way (long distance trail) also passes across the area, otherwise public footpaths are limited. The road network within the sub-area is extensive but not particularly disruptive to field pattern.

### Key Characteristics:

- Small sized regular patterned fields that are generally pastoral supporting animal grazing including sheep. Horticulture is evident across the sub-area and often detracting to rural character.
- Weak hedgerow structure within the fields, although a number of mature trees are present and individual mature oaks within fields are also characteristic of this area.
- Overhanging mature oaks generally border the winding roads and the grass verges are also a distinctive feature. Some stag headed oaks are also present. Pine trees are present, particularly the southern end of Chadwick Lane, which makes the area distinctive.
- General tree cover in the area helps retain an intimate and enclosed character.
- Brick detailing on buildings is a key characteristic of this area, although some rendered houses are also present. Manicured front gardens with well-clipped leylandii hedges are the typical enclosure to the residential properties at Chadwick End.
- Farm conversion to residential use is evident in the sub-area.
- There are several Listed Buildings in the area including the Heronfield House, which combined with the well treed river corridor provides a distinctive feature in the area.
- Ford on Oldwich Lane is a feature in the sub-area.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of the sub-area is considered to be **High**.
- The sub-area supports an attractive landscape with distinct landscape features including the Grand Union Canal, winding roads with mature trees, small scale pastoral fields, historic buildings, which impart a strong rural enclosed character to the area. The landscape features are intact and the residential properties are well integrated into the landscape due to the high level of tree and woodland cover. The landscape is generally in good condition, although there are signs of overgrazing from horses. There are a few detractors in the area including electricity pylons to the west, telegraph poles, overhead cables around Chadwick End and ornamental gateways which are incongruous to the rural character of the area.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of the sub-area is considered to be **Medium**.
- The visibility in this sub-area consists of generally medium to short distance views that are medium framed or contained, shallow and horizontal and upward in orientation. The vegetation along the roads close down the views across the area.

## Landscape Value:

- The value of the sub-area is considered to be **Medium**.
- The sub-area is locally distinctive with a strong 'sense of place' and a number of Listed Buildings. The Grand Union Canal also adds to the cultural and heritage value of the area, which is enhanced by the presence of the long distance trails comprising the Millennium Way and the Grand Union Canal Walk.

Table 15: Overall Sensitivity for Sub-Area 4B: High

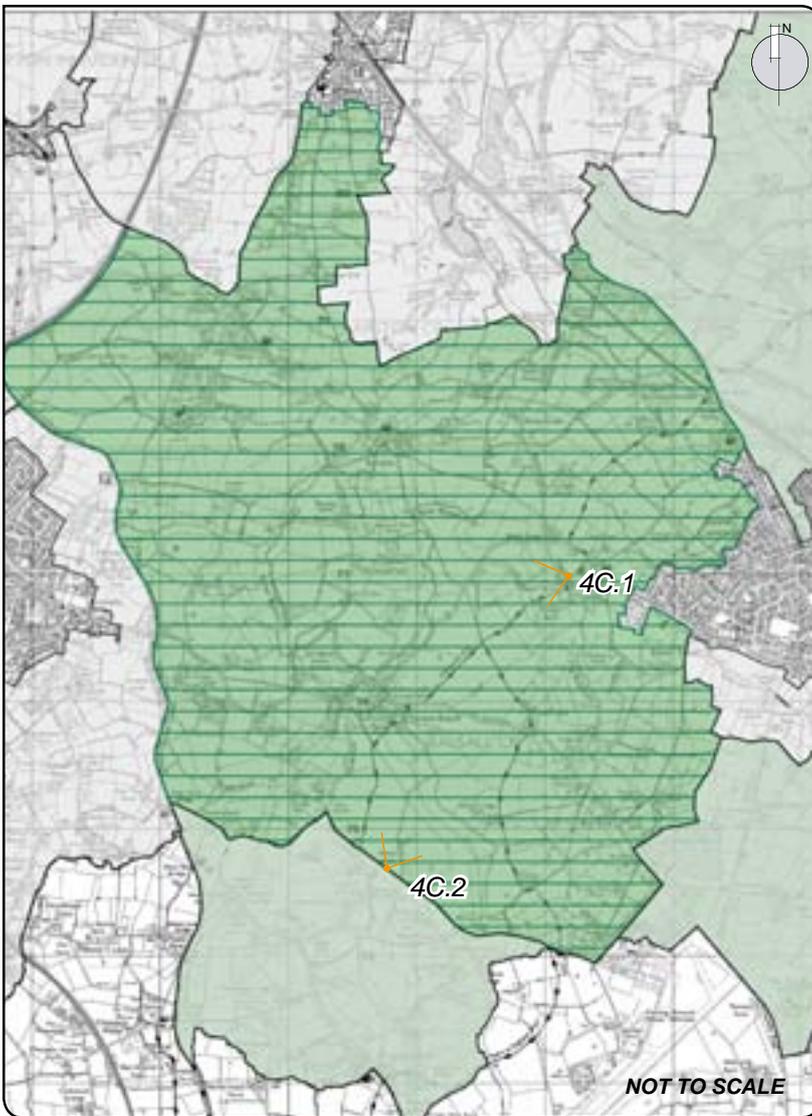
		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

## Landscape Capacity:

- The sub-area would typically have an overall **Very Low** landscape capacity to accommodate change.
- Overall, the sub-area can only accommodate very restricted areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, small scale and form, and in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness of the area. Any new development should not result in the loss of the characteristic field pattern, enclosed character or be incongruous to the building style of the area and to the rural character of the area.

Table 16: Landscape Capacity for Sub-Area 4B: Very Low

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ Negligible	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	Low	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



## Sub-Area 4C



**Photograph 4C.1:**

*Historic buildings and their intimate settings create a distinct character, such as at Magpie Lane.*



**Photograph 4C.2:**

*Hedgerows of various conditions bound the fields.*

## Description:

This sub-area is situated within the north western extent of LCA 4: Rural Centre and is distinguished by the presence of major local roads such as the A452 and Balsall Street (B4101). In contrast, a network of narrow, winding lanes including Magpie Lane and Barston Lane add to the complexity of the area. The irregular field pattern is a noticeable feature of the area that is inherently rural with a substantial covering of arable and pastoral land.

Historic settlement and distinctive historic architecture is a frequent feature within the area with long-established settlement patterns evident in the vicinity of Magpie Lane and the village of Barston. Constant traffic noise is evident which distracts from the tranquil nature and rural character of the area.

The footpath network is relatively abundant crisscrossing across the area and providing access to the countryside from Balsall Common, Hampton in Arden and outside the area from Catherine-de-Barnes and Dorridge. Barston and Temple Balsall are the main settlements in the area, which lie in close proximity the edges of larger settlements of Balsall Common and Knowle.

## Key Characteristics:

- Small to medium sized fields supporting mostly arable and some pastoral farmland.
- Fields are generally bound by hedgerows of various condition. Some however, feature only post and rail fencing.
- Mature trees within fields are characteristic of this sub-area.
- The presence of four Conservation Areas create a distinct character with their historic buildings and intimate settings to the settlements.
- The roads are generally narrow, winding and bound by mature hedgerows.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of this sub-area is considered to be **High**.
- The sub-area has clear legibility and is an attractive rural landscape with distinctive landscape features including the several historic areas that are intimate along with the well treed River Blythe corridor. The landscape is generally in good condition. There are a few detractors including electricity pylons and some busy roads particularly where they lead into Balsall Common.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of the sub-area is considered to be **Medium**.
- The visibility in this sub-area consists of a range of short and medium distance views that are medium level, wide-framed, deep and horizontal and upward in orientation. There are some long open views across the fields from the southern boundary of the area around Barston Lane. The views within the settlements in contrast are contained.

Table 17: Overall Sensitivity for Sub-Area 4C: High

		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/Negligible

## Landscape Value:

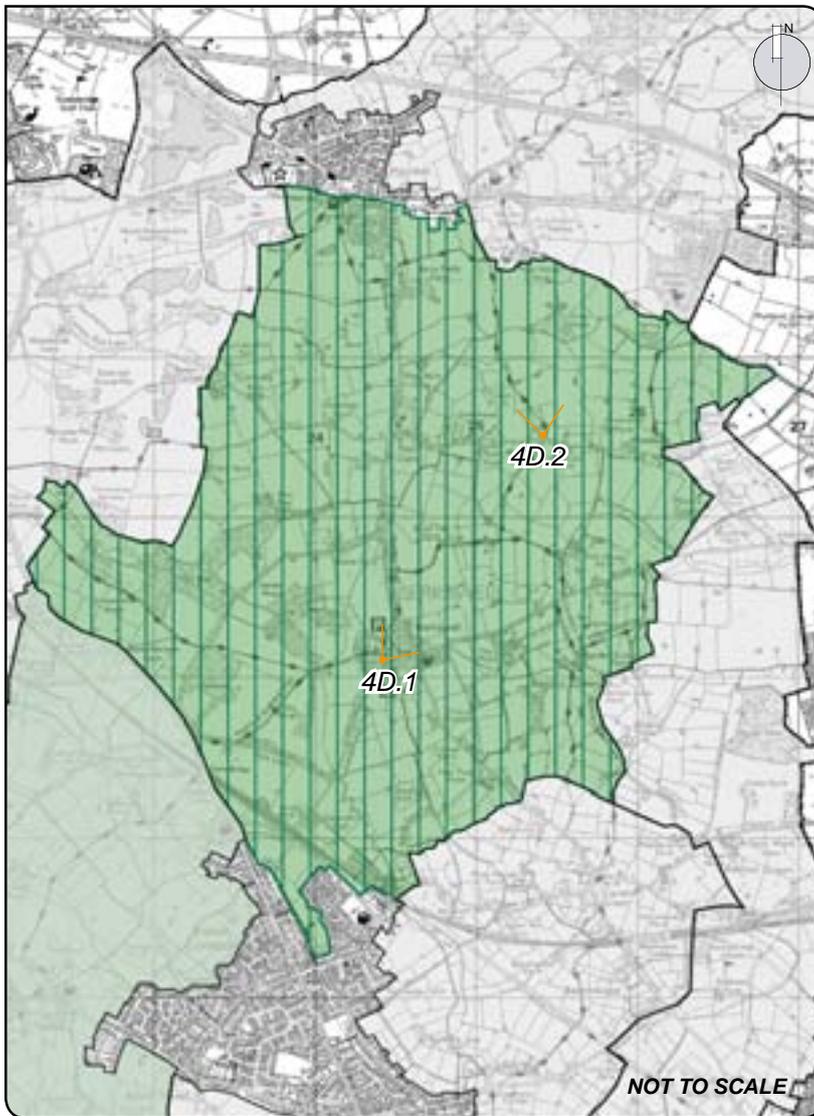
- The value of the sub-area is considered to be **Medium**.
- The sub-area is locally distinctive with a strong 'sense of place' and a number of Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Scheduled Monuments. The presence of the long distance trails comprising the Millennium Way, Heart of England Way and Coventry Way, increases the value of the area.

## Landscape Capacity:

- This sub-area would typically have an overall **Very Low** landscape capacity to accommodate change.
- Overall, this character area would be able to accommodate only very restricted areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, and in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness of the area. Any new development should not result in the loss of the inherently rural character and should maintain the dispersed settlement pattern of the area.

Table 18: Landscape Capacity for Sub-Area 4C: Very Low

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/None	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	Low	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



## Sub-Area 4D



**Photograph 4D.1:**

*Berkswell Conservation Area is well preserved.*



**Photograph 4D.2:**

*View of the rural landscape with wooded backdrops are characteristic of the sub-area and noted along the many long distance trails.*

### Description:

This sub-area is situated in the north-eastern extent of LCA 4: Rural Centre. It extends to Meriden in the north and the A452 forms the southern boundary. The area supports a rolling landscape comprising pastoral and arable fields, deciduous woodland and conifer plantations. The settlement of Berkswell lies at the heart of the area and is designated the Berkswell Conservation Area. The western extent of the sub-area is safeguarded as an area for mineral extraction and the eastern extent as an area of search for coal which may impact negatively on the landscape character of the sub-area in the long term.

There is a well-established network of roads generally running in an east-west direction with Berkswell Road providing the spinal north-south connectivity across the area. The Birmingham to Coventry railway line also passes across the southern extent and the presence of an intricate network of public footpaths and bridleways including the Heart of England Way, Coventry Way and Millennium Way (long distance trails) ensures that the sub-area is accessible and has good recreational value. Lavender Hall Fishery located within the south-eastern extent provides additional recreational amenity within the area.

### Key Characteristics:

- Small to medium sized fields, boarded by field ditches and hedgerows, supporting pastoral and arable use, generally with a well wooded background.
- Strong hedgerow structure of varying condition, many with mature hedgerow trees.
- Oak and ash are the two dominant species in the sub-area. Poplar shelterbelts are also present adding to the wooded character of the area.
- The approach to Berkswell from the east is well treed and Berkswell Conservation Area is well preserved. The newer buildings within the historical core of the settlement are well integrated into their landscape setting.
- Red brick buildings and render are typical of the vernacular in the sub-area. Large ornamental gates are present particularly along Back Lane and seem incongruous with the rural landscape character. Farm house conversion to residential use is also evident.
- The lanes tend to be narrow and winding with high hedgerows such as Baulk Lane and a number of roads are lined with mature trees and grass verges. The presence of bracken within the hedges banks along Back Lane are also a key characteristic.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of the sub-area is considered to be **High**.
- The sub-area has clear legibility with a broad road network and consistent field pattern. This is an attractive landscape with distinct landscape features including the historical settlement of Berkswell, the rolling landform and strong hedgerow structure. The landscape is intact and although this area has a complex road network this does not conflict with the field pattern. The landscape varies in condition from good to fair. There are a few detractors including electricity pylons to the north, construction noise and presence of HGVs to the west being in close proximity to the employment/commercial areas within the adjoining LCA 8.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of the sub-area is considered to be **Medium**.
- The visibility in the sub-area consists of generally medium to short distance views that are medium level, wide and contained, deep and shallow, and horizontal and upward in orientation.

Table 19: Overall Sensitivity for Sub-Area 4D: High

		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

## Landscape Value:

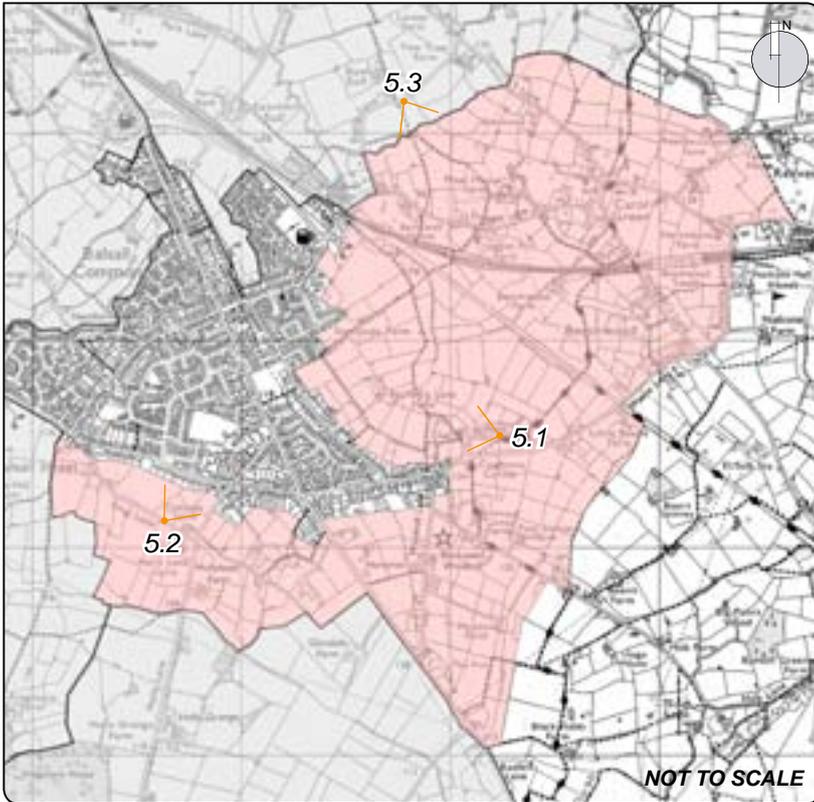
- The value of the sub-area is considered to be **Medium**.
- The sub-area is an attractive rural landscape with a large Conservation Area at the heart, which lends distinctive characteristic to the wider landscape. The area is well used and is accessible via a network of public footpaths and the presence of three long distance trails adds overall value.

## Landscape Capacity:

- The sub-area would typically have an overall **Very Low** landscape capacity to accommodate change.
- Overall, this sub-area would be able to accommodate very restricted areas of small scale new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, and form, and in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness of the area. Any new development should not be detrimental to the setting of the Berkswell Conservation Area or result in the loss of the inherently rural landscape.

Table 20: Landscape Capacity for Sub-Area 4D: Very Low

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ None	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	Low	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



**Balsall Common  
Eastern Fringe**

**LCA  
5**



**Photograph 5.1:**  
Woodland cover is largely absent with trees limited to hedgerows and streets, particularly at the urban edge of Balsall Common.



**Photograph 5.2:**  
In places, agricultural fields have given way to recreational purposes at settlement edges, urbanising the once rural setting.



**Photograph 5.3:**  
The historic irregular field pattern is evident in some locations. Electricity pylons conspicuously cross the gently undulating landscape, detracting from the rural view.

**Description:**

This area is generally flat extending to areas of undulating landscape towards the northern extent of the LCA. The area is located to the west of Balsall Common and spans just under 4.5km<sup>2</sup>.

Being in close proximity to Balsall Common the area therefore is heavily influenced by the settlement bringing in strong elements of suburbia. This is particularly noticeable around Catchems Corner and Carol Green introducing manicured lanes, close mown grass verges, footways and overhead cables. The strong influence of Balsall Common on the rural character of the area has led to the loss of the definitive edge between the urban area and countryside beyond.

Strong tree cover along streets and isolated trees within field boundaries as part of hedgerows create a strong 'sense of place' that adds to the distinctiveness of the area. Even in areas of built development where the rural aspect has been denuded, the tree structure has been retained and remains a dominant influence.

The landform along with the strong hedgerow structure creates short-distance views that are contained within the LCA. The area is easily accessible via a network of roads, footpaths and long distance trails including the Millennium Walk, Coventry Way and Kenilworth Greenway cycle path, which form key recreational routes through the area. The railway line running east to west to Coventry also passes across the character area.

**Key Characteristics:**

**Geology, soils and drainage:**

Majority of the LCA:

- Slowly permeable clayey soils with varying slightly impeded or impeded drainage.
- Warwickshire Group of Siltstone and Sandstone with Subordinate Mudstone solid geology.
- Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) of Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone solid geology.

**Southwest – south of Basall Common:**

- Naturally wet sands, gravels and silts with shallow groundwater.

**Landform and Drainage Pattern:**

- Gently undulating landform between 110m and 130m AOD, tending to be largely flat in the southern extent of the area.
- Tributaries of the River Blythe drain the area along with other springs and pools. Agricultural field ditches also form part of the drainage pattern.
- Several natural ponds are present particularly in the area between Balsall Common and the Greenway cycle path.

**Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife:**

- Land managed for arable use with smaller grassland fields around settlements.
- Small sized fields with a distinct field pattern bound by a strong hedgerow structure and some ditches. The fields are historic, most likely post-medieval enclosed fields that may have medieval origins.
- Woodland cover is generally absent and tree cover is largely limited to the hedgerows and streets with occasional scattered individual trees within the fields.
- Oaks and Ash are the two dominating species in the area lending an Arcadian character to the streetscape and includes two veteran trees located in the area south of the urban edge at Balsall Common.
- Presence of ridge and furrow within fields on Old Waste Lane add to the diversity of the landscape.
- Little Beanit Farm Meadows is a Local Wildlife Site.

**Settlement, built environment and communications:**

- There are small settlements comprising the cluster of dwellings at Carol Green and linear development at Catchems Corner, which are the main areas of settlement outside of Balsall Common.
- A number of farms scattered across the LCA have been subjected to conversions to residential use.
- There are a number of listed buildings scattered across the LCA, however most are concentrated around Carol Green including the Moat House, a Grade II listed building.
- Although not listed, there are several cottages of note located at Catchems Corner and the Berkswell Windmill is an iconic feature in the LCA.
- Communications masts and electricity pylons are visible vertical elements with overhead cables crisscrossing the landscape near to the settlements.
- Several roads run through the area connecting Balsall Common to Coventry in the east and Meriden in the north.
- A number of public footpaths and bridleways including long distance trails of the Millennium Way and Coventry Way traverse the area mostly running in a north-south direction providing connections between the roads.
- The area adjoining the eastern extent of Balsall Common, is criss-crossed with public footpaths. Being in close proximity to the built edge, the area is well used for recreation and is an important access point to the countryside.
- The disused railway line connecting Balsall Common to the University of Warwick functions as an active recreation cycle path known locally as Kenilworth Greenway which continues outside of the LCA to join up with National Cycle Network 523.

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**Sensitivities and Pressures:**

- Possible increased pressure for housing and other urbanising features from edge of Balsall Common, Carol Green and Catchems Corner may impact upon the rural character of the area.
- Neglect and potential loss of veteran trees and ancient woodland associated with development pressure.
- The landscape around contains many scattered buildings and has limited capacity to accept additional built development without detriment to landscape character through coalescence.
- Potential of farmstead sprawl with new large modern buildings and farm diversification that detract from the area. Conversion of field barns and vernacular buildings is also impacting upon landscape character.
- Almost the entire LCA bar the south-western area is a mineral safeguarded area for coal, which could have considerable impact upon the landscape character.
- Pressure from the proposed HS2 route.

## Guidelines:

**Aim: To protect the landscape pattern characteristic of the area.**

- Retain the Arcadian character, preserve openness between dwellings and resist further development.
- Retain and enhance the characteristic tree cover of oak within the area.
- Adhere to the requirements of the Solihull Woodland Strategy.
- Encourage appropriate management to retain strong hedgerow structure and the planting of individual trees along field boundaries. Tree planting in the vicinity of Balsall Common is important to its setting and approaches.
- Resist loss of field boundaries to retain irregular and historic field pattern to south of the area. Discourage amalgamation of fields and promote awareness of the Hedgerow Regulations. Develop a hedgerow register for the character area
- Conserve pastoral character and identify opportunities for conversion of arable land back to grazing land.
- Conserve the diversity of old permanent pastures. Reseeding or ploughing must be avoided and tree/woodland planting is inappropriate in these areas.
- Promote the proactive management of existing trees and planting of new trees to fit with landscape pattern in particular trees at the settlement edge.
- Encourage diversification of Local Wildlife Sites and habitat conservation areas through appropriate landscape and ecology management plans. Opportunities to improve existing habitats and create new ones should be sought.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- This is a landscape with a strong ‘sense of place’, defining landscape features and a characteristic field pattern. The Arcadian character with the oak trees is also a key feature of the area. The suburban influences and the roads within a rural setting creates a slightly unbalanced landscape, although the key elements are in a good condition. The historic field pattern around settlements is an important feature along with the associated tree structure, which contributes to the setting of these settlements in the wider landscape. There are some detracting features within the landscape including pylons and communication masts.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- The general visibility in this LCA consists of short distance views that are contained, shallow and generally in a horizontal orientation. The oak trees bordering the lanes and roads are a key visual feature in the area. Prevention of coalescence is important particularly where the urban edge has a strong relationship with existing built form.

**Table 21: Overall Sensitivity for LCA 5 – Balsall Common Eastern Fringe: Medium**

		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

## Landscape Value:

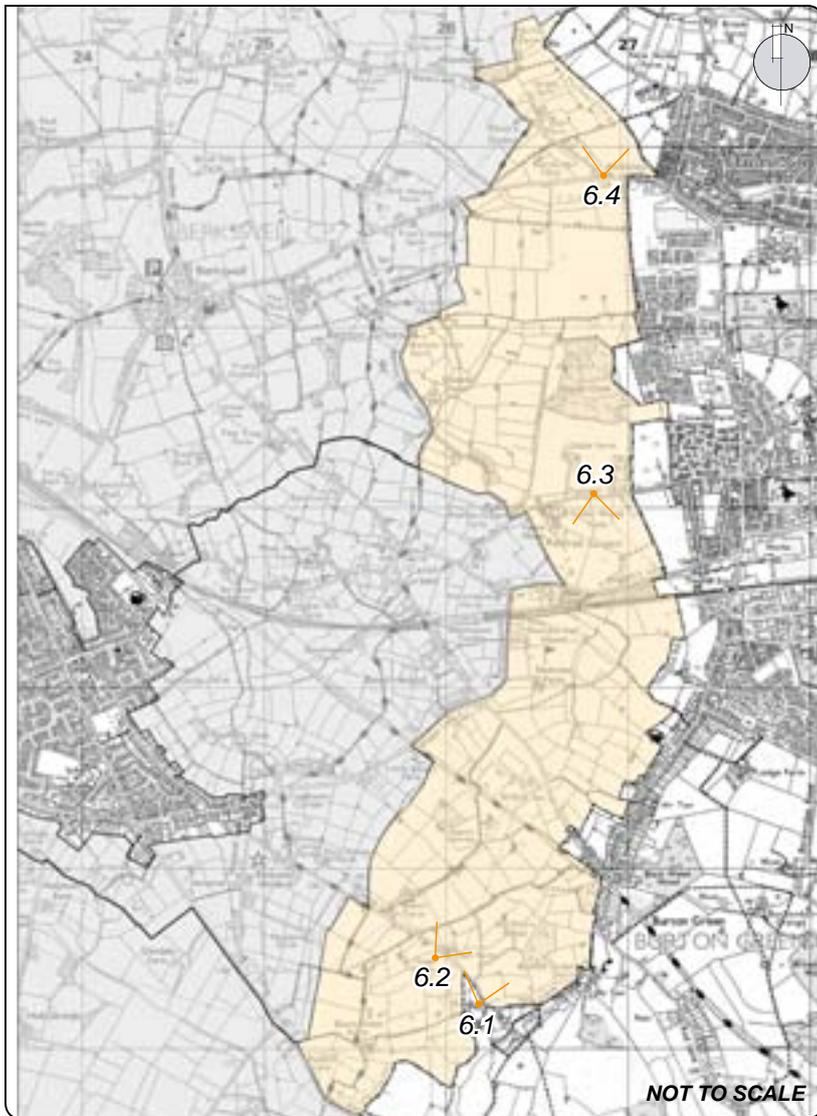
- The value of this character area is considered to be **Medium**.
- This is a locally distinctive landscape containing valued characteristics. The historic field pattern is irreplaceable and considered fundamental to the distinctiveness of the character of the area. Value is increased by the presence of the long distance trails of Millennium Way and Coventry Way.

## Landscape Capacity:

- Consistent with current guidance, it is not possible to establish a definitive baseline sensitivity to change without having details of a given proposal. However, for the purpose of this report a general assessment of the LCA's capacity to accommodate change has been undertaken. This should be used as a guide only, and will need to be re-assessed once details of any proposed development and site location are known.
- This LCA being of *Medium* overall landscape sensitivity and *Medium* landscape value, suggests that the LCA would typically have an overall **Low** landscape capacity to accommodate new development. The LCA is an attractive largely rural landscape with urban influences, being in close proximity to Balsall Common. It is characterised by its historic field pattern and pastoral fields.
- Overall, the area would be able to accommodate only small areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and features of the landscape. Any new development should not result in the loss of the historical field patterns or facilitate the further expansion of Balsall Common into the countryside.

**Table 22: Landscape Capacity for LCA 5 – Balsall Common Eastern Fringe: Low**

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ None	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	<b>Low</b>	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



LCA  
**6**

**Eastern Fringe**



**Photograph 6.1:**  
*Undulating landform of agriculture, woodland/ plantation blocks and numerous arterial roads linking Solihull and Coventry which follow the landscape pattern.*



**Photograph 6.2:**  
*Medium to large sized arable fields interspersed with deciduous woodland and a strong contingent of mature trees within hedgerows. Electricity pylons and telegraph poles are prevalent.*



**Photograph 6.3:**  
*There is no main settlement within the area; settlement largely comprises converted farms and smaller ribbon developments such as along Duggins Lane.*

**Description:**

This undulating area lies at the easternmost extent of the Borough where it adjoins the city of Coventry. The LCA spans just over 5.5km<sup>2</sup>.

Although close to the urban edge, this character area retains a strong sense of rural identity that provides a countryside buffer between Balsall Common and Coventry. The LCA provides an attractive gateway to the countryside from the urban edge, which contains long distance trails, recreational cycle paths and a good footpath and bridleway network.

Fields are larger and more regular to the north of the area in contrast to the medium to small scale and irregular field pattern in the southern extent of the LCA. Fields are mostly bound by hedgerows of various condition, the southern area having a stronger hedgerow structure with oak and ash present within them. Hedgerows along roadsides are generally high trimmed with tall overhanging trees.

Small copses and the landform break down views across the area. Views of the urban edge towards Coventry are noticeable in certain locations but are generally medium distance.

Settlement is sparse and farmstead diversification is noticeable throughout the area. Linear settlements have developed along some arterial roads specifically at Duggins Lane and Benton Green Lane. The Berkswell substation within the central extent of the character area is a partial detractor and electricity pylons and overhead cables are a constant feature within the landscape.

**Key Characteristics:**

**Geology, soils and drainage:**

The northern area consists of:

- Slowly permeable clayey soils with varying slightly impeded and impeded drainage.
- Warwickshire Group of Siltstone and Sandstone with Subordinate Mudstone solid geology.

The southern area consists of:

- Slowly permeable clayey soils, seasonally wet with impeded drainage.
- Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) of Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone solid geology

**Landform and Drainage Pattern:**

- Undulating landform between 120m and 140m AOD.
- Agricultural field ditches form the main structure of the drainage pattern within this area which is supplemented with several pools, natural springs and a reservoir at Victoria Farm.

**Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife:**

- Mixed land use is dominant across the area with arable fields interspersed by deciduous woodland and coniferous plantations. This also includes vegetation on the golf course within the grounds of the Nailcote Hall Hotel.
- Medium to large sized fields with a distinct regular rectilinear pattern are a common feature to the north of Rough Close in contrast to the more irregular field pattern to the south of the LCA. Most of the fields are generally bound by hedgerows.
- Woodland cover is largely formed of plantation blocks and deciduous woodland that are scattered across the area. Rough Close in the north, is the largest of these which also includes a camping site.
- Strong tree cover prevails within this area including hedgerows, street trees and the occasional standalone trees within fields.
- The area includes three Local Wildlife Sites at Beanit Green Lane, Big Pours and Little Pours Woodland and Beanit Farm Hedge.

**Settlement, built environment and communications:**

- Areas of main settlement are barely noticeable within this character area. The LCA largely comprises converted farms and smaller ribbon development particularly along Duggins Lane and Benton Green Lane due to the close proximity of Coventry's western edge.
- There are three listed buildings in this LCA. Nailcote Hall is a Grade II listed late 16<sup>th</sup> century timber frame and red brick house, now a hotel and golf course.
- The Electrical sub-station is a prominent feature within the central extent of the area.
- Electricity pylons, telegraph poles and wires are the main vertical elements in the area. Other vertical elements include the water tower near Duggins Lane.
- The Birmingham to Coventry railway line and numerous arterial roads from Coventry to Solihull cross this LCA, however connectivity within the area remains poor as most of these roads runs east to west with limited connections north to south. The roads closely follow landscape pattern and are not at odds with the landscape.
- There are a number of footpaths and bridleways traversing the area, however most run east to west in contrast to the southern area where the routes criss-cross the landscape. Coventry Way and Millennium Way are two long distance trails that cross the area.
- Kenilworth Greenway, a cyclepath on the disused old railway line is a key recreational route across the area.

**Sensitivities and Pressures:**

- Neglect of woodland management would decrease the long-term sustainability of tree cover in this characteristically wooded area.
- Views of business parks and their associated facilities detract from the positive rural attributes of this area.
- Possible increased pressure for access to open countryside from the edge of Coventry and Balsall Common may impact upon the rural character of the area.
- Decline in frequency of hedgerow trees due to neglect and lack of replacement.
- The southern half of the area plays an important role in separating Balsall Common from Coventry and is sensitive to development which would result in coalescence.
- Pressure for new housing in the attractive countryside due to easy access to Coventry, increasing pressure on the arterial roads. Limited capacity of the area to accept development without impact upon character.
- Potential of farmstead sprawl with new large modern buildings that detract from the area.
- This area is a mineral safeguarded area for coal, which could have considerable impact upon landscape character.

**Photograph 6.4:**

*The management and replacement of hedgerow trees is important for the sustainability of the area's character.*

## Guidelines:

**Aim: To protect the landscape pattern characteristic of the area.**

- Encourage appropriate management to enhance hedgerow structure and the planting of individual trees along field boundaries particularly in and around Broad Lane. Tree planting, in the form of copses and clumps, in the vicinity of Coventry is important to mitigate large scale uses including sports and industrial facilities and to preserve the setting and rural aspect of the area.
- Resist loss of field boundaries to retain irregular field pattern to south and regular field pattern to the north of the area. Discourage amalgamation of fields and promote awareness of the Hedgerow Regulations. Refer to Habitat Biodiversity Audit for further detail.
- Promote proactive management of existing woodland in accordance with the Solihull Woodland Strategy.
- Encourage diversification of Local Wildlife Sites and other habitat conservation areas through appropriate management practices. Opportunities to improve existing habitats and create new ones should be sought.
- Identify appropriate access points to the countryside and ensure that new facilities, signs and paths are low-key and respect landscape character.
- Where new buildings are required they should be located in association with existing farmsteads and settlement across the area and located so as not to require new access arrangements.
- To promote understanding of the heritage features in the area and their contribution to landscape character.
- Resist any development that would risk the character of the wooded boundaries to the fields and their landscape value.

**Aim: To integrate the edge of Coventry and other large scale development in the landscape and reduce its visual impact.**

- Structure planting in and amongst any new development must be considered to break up the mass of building in the rural landscape with species of an appropriate scale.
- Consideration must be given to the space between buildings for robust structure planting opportunities to ensure the overall site is unified with its landscape setting.
- All new development proposals for large scale buildings require a landscape scheme as an integral part of a planning application to ensure the impact on landscape character is fully mitigated. Design at the urban edge requires high quality design and the use of appropriate materials, which are appropriate to local character and which maintain and enhance the distinctiveness of the area.
- New development should avoid large scale encroachment to respect the setting of Coventry and preserve the rural countryside within the area.

**Aim: To manage access for recreation at the urban edge:**

- Promote the enhancement of the footpath network and its contribution to landscape character and appreciation.
- Explore opportunities to improve public enjoyment of the area, through access agreements following appropriate routes, that would cause minimal disturbance.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **High**.
- This is an attractive landscape with a strong 'sense of place', distinct landscape features including strong tree cover, characteristic field pattern, no main settlements, tranquil nature and general rural character. Overall the landscape is well- balanced and unified with elements in very good condition. There are a few detracting features including the electricity pylons and electricity sub-station.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- The general visibility in this LCA consists of medium distance views that are generally low level, fragmented and shallow with a horizontal orientation. Small copses and landform break down views across the area and strong tree cover forms the backdrop in many views across the area. Views of main settlements are not noticeable, however there is a strong relationship with Coventry's western edge in some places in contrast to the weaker areas where intervisibility is poor. Prevention of coalescence is important in this character area.

## Landscape Value:

- The value of this character area is considered to be **Medium**.
- The area is an attractive rural landscape and is a well preserved example of the Warwickshire countryside. It is locally distinctive in terms of being tranquil and rural whilst in close proximity to the urban edge of Coventry. This area provides good recreational value through its accessibility to the countryside provided by the network of Public Rights of Way including the long distance trails and cycleway.

## Landscape Capacity:

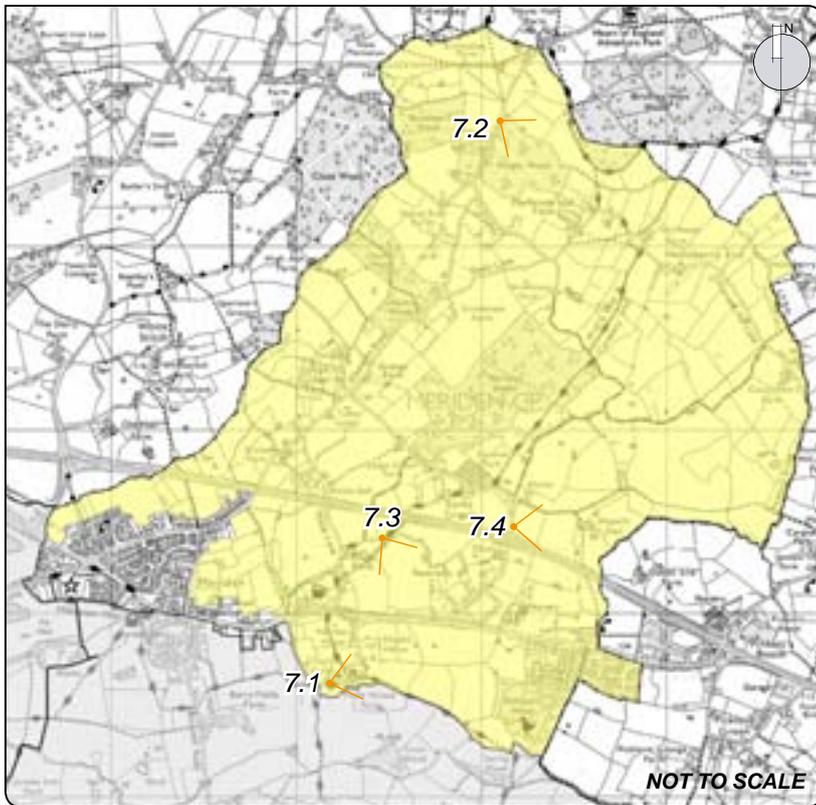
- Consistent with current guidance, it is not possible to establish a definitive baseline sensitivity to change without having details of a given development proposal. However, for the purpose of this report a general assessment of the LCA's capacity to accommodate change has been undertaken. This should be used as a guide only, and will need to be re-assessed once details of any proposed development and site location are known.
- This LCA being of **High** overall landscape sensitivity and **Medium** landscape value, suggests that the LCA would typically have an overall **Very Low** landscape capacity to accommodate new development.
- The LCA is an intrinsically rural landscape and serves as a gateway to the countryside from the city of Coventry. It is an important LCA due to its geographical positioning, providing a crucial buffer that acts in restricting the coalescence of Balsall Common and Coventry.
- Overall, this area would be able to accommodate very limited areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and features of the area. Any new development should not result in the loss of the rural quality of the LCA and should avoid any opportunities for merger between the settlements.

**Table 23: Overall Sensitivity for LCA 6 – Eastern Fringe: High**

		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

**Table 24: Landscape Capacity for LCA 6 – Eastern Fringe: Very Low**

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ None	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	Low	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



LCA  
**7**

Northern Upland



**Photograph 7.1:**  
The setting of Church Farm and St Laurence Church is an important part of the area's historic character.



**Photograph 7.2:**  
Large woodland cover is common throughout and adds to the rural and wooded character.



**Photograph 7.3:**  
The agricultural landscape comprises medium to large scale fields of an irregular pattern. Weak hedgerow structure is common despite a good contingent of mature trees.

**Description:**

This LCA covers an area of 8.15km<sup>2</sup> in the north east of the Borough, to the east of the village of Meriden. The landform is generally undulating and higher than the neighbouring character areas, allowing long views out to both the cities of Coventry and Birmingham.

Land use in the area is predominantly agricultural with some residential interspersed with large areas covered by woodland. Horticulture is also evident within this LCA with the presence of riding schools that serve the high demand for recreation in the area. Strong hedgerow structure and narrow roads are characteristic with high hedgerows bordering single track lanes. Good examples of green lanes can be found in the area such as Walsh Lane to the south-west of the area. The extensive woodland cover forms the backdrop of most views across the area and is an important landscape feature.

This area contains the Meriden Hill Conservation Area, the setting of which is particularly distinct and plays an important role in contributing to the wider character of the surrounding countryside. This area is relatively quieter than other northern parts of the Borough, however it isn't exempt from some road noise as the A45 traverses the area.

The main settlements in the area are the eastern edge of Meriden and Millisons Wood. A static caravan park is also present at Eaves Green in addition to a number of individual farmsteads that have not undergone residential conversion. Majority of the character area, with the exception of the two fields at the south-western edge, is designated as a mineral safeguard area for coal. A number of public footpaths including the long distance trails such the Heart of England and Coventry Way are present within this character area.

**Key Characteristics:**

**Geology, soils and drainage:**

- Slowly permeable clayey soils with slightly impeded drainage.
- Warwickshire Group of Siltstone and Sandstone with Subordinate Mudstone solid geology.

**Landform and Drainage Pattern:**

- This is an upland area forming a plateau ranging from 180m to 110m AOD.
- High point situated in the northern extent of the LCA near Meighs Wood/ Wood End Farm. Sloping towards the south-east and south-west. This area is comparatively higher than the surrounding Borough.
- Pickford Brook and reservoirs drain the LCA. Numerous field ponds are also present and considered to be characteristic of this area.

**Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife:**

- Land use is predominantly agriculture and residential interspersed by woodland blocks. The presence of horseculture is evident in this area through riding schools, bridleways and horse paddocks.
- Irregular field pattern ranges from medium to large scale fields.
- A strong hedgerow structure is present with most field boundaries being formed of hedgerows. However, open boundaries exist giving rise to the amalgamation of the fields which impacts negatively on the character of the area.
- Extensive woodland cover is present within this area. Meriden Shafts is the largest woodland located in the central extent of the LCA. The woodlands dominate the skyline in many views across the area.
- This is an area of good tree cover extending from hedgerow trees to woodlands and some scattered individual trees.
- There are three Local Wildlife Sites comprising Peastockings, Eaves Green Lane Hedgerow and Millison's Wood, which is also an ancient woodland and a Local Nature Reserve.

**Settlement, built environment and communications:**

- Millison's Wood is the main settlement in this area. However, though Meriden does lie within the area, it adjoins the boundary of the LCA to the south-west. A static caravan park is also present at Eaves Green. Individual farmsteads are also scattered across the area.
- Northern part predominantly wooded & was more wooded, surrounding fields are assarts with enclosures dating to late medieval period.
- The Meriden Hill Conservation Area, located at the southern boundary is a key feature. The Moated site at Marlbrook Hall Farm and Churchyard Cross in St Laurence's are both Scheduled Monuments and the setting of these are important to the character of the surrounding landscape.
- A majority of the listed buildings are concentrated within the Meriden Hill Conservation Area and also across the western extent of the LCA including Walsh Hall, a Grade II\* listing.
- The wider landscape setting of Church Farm is distinct and marked by its tranquil nature, red boundary walls and single track lanes.
- The A45 cuts across the area from east to west just north of Meriden and is noticeable in the landscape due to road noise particularly around Eaves Green.
- Eaves Green caravan park is a detracting feature in some views across the area.
- Narrow single track roads with high bracken hedgerows are characteristic of this area. Views from these minor roads are generally short and contained.
- Red brick and render buildings with tiled roofs are the dominant vernacular features of the area.
- Long views are afforded across the LCA towards Coventry and Birmingham from Fillongley Road.
- This area is subject to air traffic noise from the Birmingham International Airport situated further to the west.
- A number of public footpaths exist in the LCA including long distance trails forming part of the Heart of England and Coventry Way.

**Sensitivities and Pressures:**

- Neglect and potential loss of ancient woodland will impact the character of the area.
- The straight edges of the A45 corridor to the north of the LCA are insensitive to the irregular field pattern of the area.
- The landscape contains many scattered buildings and has limited capacity to accept additional built development without detriment to landscape character through coalescence.
- Pressure for barn conversions, increasing domestic influence, development of modern farm buildings and additional farm dwellings are evident in this area.
- Loss of biodiversity through intensive farming and land management.
- Decline in frequency of hedgerow trees due to neglect and lack of replacement.
- Pressure for mineral search.



**Photograph 7.4:**

*The area is predominantly agricultural with woodland blocks and field boundary trees. From Showell Lane there are long distance views towards Coventry. Elsewhere within the LCA, Birmingham can be seen on the distant horizon.*

## Guidelines:

### ***Aim: To protect the landscape pattern characteristic of the area.***

- Encourage appropriate management to retain the strong hedgerow structure and the planting of individual trees along field boundaries particularly in close proximity to the A45. Tree planting in the vicinity of Meriden is also important to its setting and approaches.
- Resist further loss of field boundaries to retain the irregular field pattern in the north west of the area. Discourage the amalgamation of fields and promote awareness of the Hedgerow Regulations. Refer to the Habitat Biodiversity Audit for further detail.
- Promote proactive management of existing woodland in accordance with the Solihull Woodland Strategy.
- Create links between existing woodland following green lanes and footpaths and enhance nature conservation assets to fit with the Solihull Green Infrastructure Study.
- Where new buildings are required they should be located in association with existing farmsteads and settlement across the area and located so as not to require new access arrangements and subject to no adverse effect on the historic character.
- Protect the long views out towards Coventry and Birmingham.
- Conserve pastoral character and identify opportunities for conversion of arable land back to pasture.

### ***Aim: To promote understanding of the heritage features in the area and their contribution to landscape character.***

- Protect the landscape setting of the Meriden Hill Conservation Area and the Meriden Green Conservation Area and resist development that would impact upon the character of the scattered farmsteads and listed buildings across the LCA.
- Protect ancient woodland and develop strategy for proactive management and enhancement in accordance with the Solihull Woodland Strategy.
- Protect the landscape setting of the River Blythe, which is a key feature of the area.
- Identify further historic and archaeological features suitable for scheduling and explore the potential to use as an

educational resource.

### ***Aim: To integrate the A45 corridor and other large scale development in the landscape and reduce its visual impact.***

- Support planting along the corridor of native species appropriate to the character of the area. Linear planting along its length should be avoided that would accentuate the roads presence in the landscape.
- Promote the management of roadside tree planting and links with woodland in the surrounding countryside to improve integration of the A45 corridor in the landscape.
- Design at the settlement edge requires high quality approach and the use of appropriate materials to maintain the distinctiveness of the area.
- New development should avoid large scale encroachment to respect the scattered nature of settlement beyond the edge of Meriden.

### ***Aim: To manage access for recreation at the settlement edge:***

- Survey how walkers use the area to improve the safety and enjoyment of the countryside particularly around Eaves Green.
- Promote the enhancement of the footpath network and its contribution to landscape character and appreciation.
- Explore opportunities to improve public enjoyment of the

area, through access agreements following appropriate routes, that would cause minimal disturbance.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **High**.
- This is an attractive landscape with a strong 'sense of place', distinct landscape features including extensive woodland cover, narrow lanes and high hedgerows that create a harmonious and unified landscape. Overall, the landscape is in very good condition. There are a few detracting features such as communication masts and the caravan park at Eaves Green.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- The general visibility in this LCA consists of long to medium distance views that are elevated, fragmented and contained, in parts shallow with a horizontal orientation. Strong tree cover forms the backdrop in many views across the area.

Views to the cities of Coventry and Birmingham are a key feature of this area. There is a strong relationship with the Conservation Area at Meriden Hill to the south of the LCA.

**Table 25: Overall Sensitivity for LCA 7 – Northern Upland: High**

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>
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		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

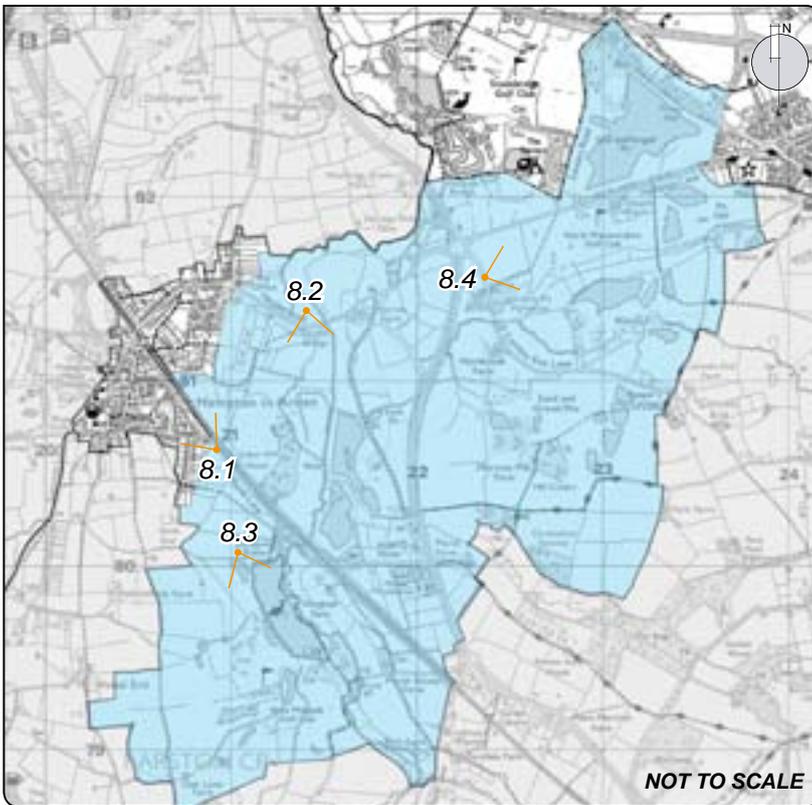
woodlands along with the unique landform contribute towards the local distinctiveness of this area. The value of the area is increased by the presence of the two long distance trails passing through the centre of the LCA.

## Landscape Capacity:

- Consistent with current guidance, it is not possible to establish a definitive baseline sensitivity to change without having details of a given development proposal. However, for the purpose of this report a general assessment of the LCA's capacity to accommodate change has been undertaken. This should be used as a guide only, and will need to be re-assessed once details of any proposed development and site location are known.
- Being of *High* overall landscape sensitivity and *Medium* landscape value, this suggests that the LCA would typically have an overall **Very Low** landscape capacity to accommodate new development.
- The LCA covers large areas of ancient woodland and local wildlife sites. It is an area that is distinctly rural with limited development.
- This area would be able to accommodate new development but only in very restricted areas, which would need to be of an appropriate type, of small scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and features of the area. Any

## Landscape Value:

- The value of this character area is considered to be **Medium**.
- This is a locally distinctive landscape containing valued characteristics. The Meriden Hill Conservation Area along with several listed buildings provide historical and cultural associations within the area. Local Wildlife Sites, ancient



LCA  
8

Blythe Lowland



**Photograph 8.1:**  
The railway line is a prominent feature in the west and south. PRow provide crucial access including passes underneath the railway.



**Photograph 8.2:**  
Local Wildlife Sites are focussed on wetland habitats such as Patrick Farm Meadow on the River Blythe.



**Photograph 8.3:**  
Large water bodies in the form of angling lakes are a feature, restored from historic mineral extraction sites.

**Description:**

This is an area covering approximately 7km<sup>2</sup> of active mineral extraction with some restoration to recreational and agricultural use.

Mineral extraction being a key land use in this area is a strong detracting element within the landscape. Most of the mineral workings are located towards the northern extent of the area where they appear incongruous with the overriding rural character of the area. A number of golf courses exist within the area along with lakes for angling, which provide distinct areas of recreation serving the urban areas of Solihull. The River Blythe flows through this character area and the landform is generally flat with an open meadow landscape prevailing along the river corridor. Tree cover is extensive due to the scattered woodland blocks and copses strewn across the area and together these form positive features within the lower Blythe river valley.

The A452 is a major arterial road that segregates the area into eastern and western land parcels with limited connectivity between. The Birmingham to Coventry railway line also passes through the area and divides the landscape.

**Key Characteristics:**

**Geology, soils and drainage:**

- Largely permeable alluvial and glacial clays, sand and gravel deposits, naturally wet soils with high groundwater.
- Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) of Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone solid geology.

**Landform and Drainage Pattern:**

- Flat landform to gently undulating to the east ranging from 90m to 110m AOD forming a river flood plain.
- River Blythe with associated network of drainage ditches, plus several large water bodies mostly associated with mineral extraction and recreational use.

**Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife:**

- Varied land use with large areas being set aside for mineral extraction (sand and gravel pits), golf courses and some agricultural land.
- Medium to large sized fields of a regular pattern bound by hedgerows of varying conditions. In some areas the hedgerows are fragmented or non-existent leading to open field boundaries particularly noticeable within south-western extent of the area and to the east of the A452. The eastern area has bracken hedgebanks along the roads.
- Pockets of woodland cover are scattered across the area.
- A few individual trees are noted within the fields but most of the tree cover is limited to hedgerows, woodland and copses within the recreational areas.
- There are two Local Wildlife Sites in this area to be found at Patrick Farm Meadow and Mercote Mill Pool.
- The Patrick Farm Meadows comprises river meadows along the banks of the River Blythe, creating an open landscape, that is an important asset to the area.
- The key SSSI in this area is the River Blythe that runs across the extent of the LCA.

**Settlement, built environment and communications:**

- There are no main settlements within this area, however the LCA adjoins two settlements at Hampton in Arden to the west and Meriden to the north-east.
- This is a largely industrial area with a small number of historic farmsteads strewn across the landscape such as Hornbrook Farmhouse and Meriden Mill Farmhouse. Although this is a hub of industrial activity, the area is mostly perceived as being predominantly rural.
- There is a Scheduled Monument, Packhorse Bridge, located near Marsh Lane which is evident of historic droving routes.
- Evidence of prehistoric, Roman, medieval & post medieval activity, moated settlements, ridge & furrow are also present in the LCA.
- The Birmingham to Coventry railway line and the A452 form the two major transport corridors within this LCA and these corridors are further supported by further minor roads. The straight roads within the area conflict with the landscape pattern.
- This area has a good network number of footpaths particularly within the eastern extent of the LCA. A majority of the footpaths connect to the main roads and Hampton in Arden in a general north-south direction. Millennium Way, a long distance trail, forms part of the eastern border of the character area.

**Sensitivities and Pressures:**

- Neglect of woodland management will decrease the long-term sustainability of tree cover in this characteristically wooded area.
- Public Rights of Way provide crucial access to the rural countryside. Maintenance of these routes is critical to retain good connections across the area.
- The area is an active mineral extraction zone and further areas of search for extraction may have impact upon the landscape character.
- Pressure exists from the proposed HS2 route.

**Photograph 8.4:**

*Active mineral extraction sites are frequent within this LCA and a strong detracting feature of the landscape.*

## Guidelines:

### ***Aim: To protect the landscape pattern characteristic of the area.***

- Encourage new planting within the railway corridor to link with planting associated with the sand and gravel pits.
- Discourage planting along the River Blythe and the river meadows that would affect the nature conservation and open river corridor landscape character of the area.
- Retain and enhance river channel diversity and marginal vegetation.
- Encourage reinstatement of river meadows along the river corridor to create a buffer zone between the river network and quarrying activities.
- Encourage appropriate management to retain and enhance hedgerow structure and the planting of individual trees along field boundaries particularly during the reinstatement of mineral extraction areas. Tree planting in the vicinity of Hampton in Arden is important to its setting and approaches.
- Promote the proactive management of existing woodland and planting of new woodland to fit with landscape pattern.
- Strengthen existing woodland to enhance the character of the area and increase diversity of woodland edge with native planting.
- Create links between existing woodland following field boundaries and enhance nature conservation assets to fit with Solihull Green Infrastructure Study.
- Identify appropriate access points to the countryside and potential connections to the long distance trails across the area.

### ***Aim: To promote understanding of the heritage features in the area and their contribution to landscape character.***

- Identify heritage river features of interest and develop strategy for their protection.
- Resist any development that would risk the character of the river landscape and its historic value.
- Promote accessibility within this area and provide interpretation of historic features.
- Protect the landscape setting of Hampton in Arden and resist development that would impact upon the character of the settlement.

### ***Aim: To integrate the A452 corridor in the landscape and reduce its visual impact.***

- Support planting along the road corridor of native species appropriate to the character of the area. Linear planting along its length should be avoided that would accentuate the road's presence in the landscape.
- Promote the management of roadside tree planting and links with woodland in the surrounding countryside to improve integration of the A452 corridor in the landscape.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- This landscape is attractive in places and is of good recreational and amenity value. However, this LCA has the dominating land use of mineral extraction such that the landscape structure and characteristic pattern has lost legibility in some areas, such that the overriding character remain vague as experienced around Cornets End Lane. The transport corridors and the quarrying interrupt the landscape and provide a setting that is unbalanced and overall the landscape condition ranges between very good and fair. The water meadows and large waterbodies are important positive features in the area. There are some detracting features including the straight roads, which conflict with landscape pattern, the A452, overhead cables and quarrying activities.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- The general visibility in this LCA consists of medium to short distance views that are medium level, framed and wide, although deep with a horizontal orientation. Copses and tree cover along with the large water bodies create visual interest. There is a strong visual relationship with Hampton in Arden to the west of the LCA.

**Table 27: Overall Sensitivity for LCA 8 – Blythe Lowland: Medium**

		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	<b>Medium</b>	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

## Landscape Value:

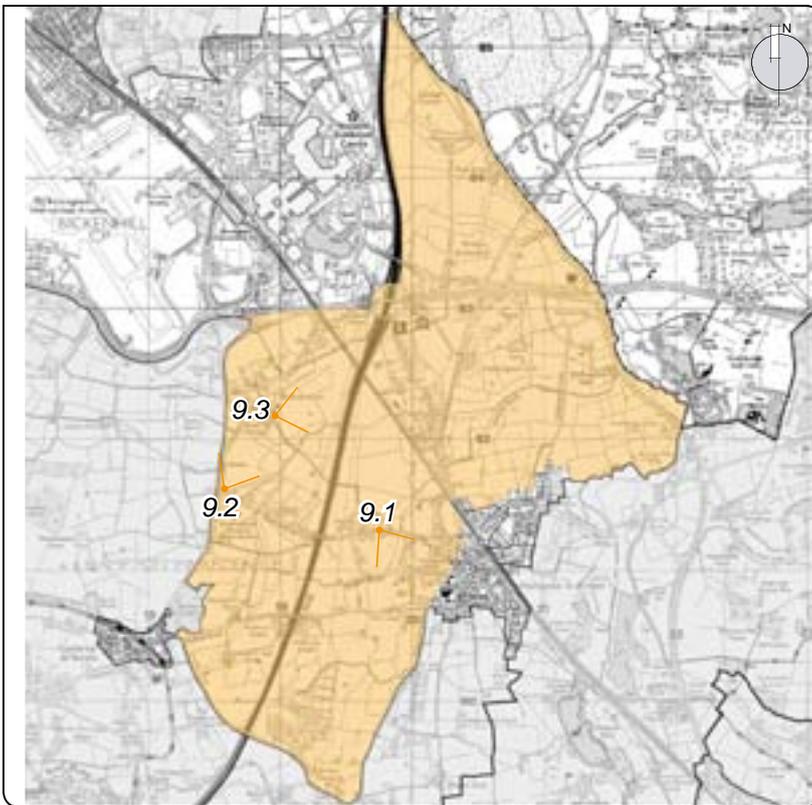
- Aspects of the landscape character within this LCA vary in value from *Low* to *High*.
- This area is partly used for mineral extraction and therefore considered to be of low importance and value. This area also features a Scheduled Monument which is considered to be of National historical and cultural importance and although it is considered to be of high value, the SM and its setting does not constitute the value of the entire LCA. This area provides extensive recreational and amenity value and is a distinctive area. The value is further enhanced by the presence of Millennium Way, a long distance trail and the rarity of the river meadows.
- Combining all elements that provide value to this LCA, the overall Landscape Value of this character area is considered to be **Medium**.

## Landscape Capacity:

- As stated in our methodology and in line with the current guidance, it is not possible to establish a definitive baseline sensitivity to change without having details of a given development proposal. However, for the purpose of this report a general assessment of the LCA's capacity to accommodate change has been undertaken. This should be used as a guide only, and will need to be re-assessed once details of any proposed development and site location are known.
- Being of *Medium* overall landscape sensitivity and *Medium* landscape value, suggests that the LCA would typically have an overall **Low** landscape capacity to accommodate new development.
- The LCA is a mixture of various land uses with extensive areas of amenity and recreational value. Quarrying is dominant within this area and the landscape is changing constantly due to the mineral extraction and restoration proposals that follow. The LCA supports features of irreplaceable value such as the River Blythe SSSI and the associated open river meadows.
- This area is likely be able to accommodate some new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form and in keeping with the existing character and features of the area. Any new developments should not result in the loss of the irreplaceable habitats and recreational and amenity value. Development proposals should also respect and enhance the setting of Hampton in Arden and where possible reinstate the special character of the river meadows.

**Table 28: Landscape Capacity for LCA 8 – Blythe Lowland: Low**

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ None	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	<b>Low</b>	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



NOT TO SCALE



## Description:

This is an undulating area, extending to just under 10km<sup>2</sup>. There is an overall dominance of manmade structures such as road, pylons, railway lines, mineral extractions, linear developments and other industrial uses.

This area is characterised by the varied land use and diverse landscape pattern with an eclectic mix of historical elements, agricultural fields, residential development, industrial sites, waterways and transport infrastructure. Hampton Manor with its associated woodland cover and parkland features is a key feature within this area, which provides a distinctive landscape setting to the western edge of Hampton in Arden.

The area to the north of East Way is a mineral safeguarded area with current extractions taking place. Despite the presence of the mineral industry, the central extent of the character area is distinctly rural by virtue of its farmland and Hampton Manor. The woodland associated with Hampton Manor and Shadow Brook is a distinctive feature and forms the backdrop in many views across the area. Road, rail and air traffic noise is noticeable in the area due to the strong presence of the transport corridor. There is a limited footpath network within the area and access to the countryside on foot from the urban areas is poor.

## Key Characteristics:

### Geology, soils and drainage:

Majority of the LCA:

- Slowly permeable clayey soils, seasonally wet with impeded drainage.
- Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) of Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone solid geology.

Northern section (north of A45 and between the M42 and A452):

- Largely permeable alluvial and glacial clays, sand and gravel deposits, naturally wet soils with shallow groundwater.
- Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) of Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone solid geology.

### Landform and Drainage Pattern:

- Undulating landform ranging from 80m to 120m AOD.
- Hollywell Brook, Shadow Brook and tributaries of River Blythe along with some field ditches and smaller ponds form the characteristic drainage pattern of the area.

# Motorway Corridor

# LCA 9



**Photograph 9.1:**

*Hampton Manor and its parkland character provides the setting for the western edge of Hampton in Arden.*



**Photograph 9.2:**

*St Peter's Church, Bickenhill, is distinctive in the distance with its spire creating a prominent landmark in the skyline.*

**Photograph 9.3:**

*This LCA is a transport corridor with pylons and the M42 running through the centre alongside open fields.*

### Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife:

- Mixed land use prevails with the northern and southern extent of the area being in industrial use, including mineral extraction and sewage works. Arable and pastoral fields make up the majority of the remaining character area with some linear developments.
- Medium to large sized fields of a regular pattern are bound generally by hedgerows of varying condition. In some areas hedgerows have denuded resulting in open field boundaries.
- Some pockets of woodland exist including deciduous and coniferous plantations, which are particularly noticeable to the northern extent of the area with a strong concentration around Hampton Manor.
- The Shadow Brook corridor supports extensive tree cover and some individual trees are also noticeable within the fields bordering the watercourse.
- There are four Local Wildlife Sites namely, Denbigh Spinney, Meadows on Old Station Road, Wayside Cottage Meadows and Greensward Piece.
- Nursery Cottage Brickworks Jackson is recognised as a Regionally Important Geological Site and is located within this area.
- Situated off Shadowbrook Lane, lies the Bickenhill Meadows SSSI, which is split into two parts, one part lying within LCA 1 and one within this LCA.

### Settlement, built environment and communications:

- Hampton in Arden adjoining the eastern boundary of the character area dictates the settlement pattern with ribbon development extending along Old Station Road out towards Junction 6 of the M42. Bickenhill is a small settlement with some ribbon development extending along Church Lane towards the A45 to the north. Apart from this ribbon development, isolated farms are scattered across the central part of the character area.
- The National Motorcycle Museum, a cultural heritage resource, is located to the south of the A45.

- There are two Conservation Areas situated in the LCA, namely Bickenhill and Hampton in Arden. Hampton in Arden lies within the LCA with the eastern extent falling within the urban area. (not subject to this Landscape Character Assessment).
- A majority of the listed buildings are within the Conservation Areas with a small number located towards the eastern extent of the LCA. St Peter's Church in Bickenhill, a key feature within this area, is a Grade I listed building and Diddington Hall, also situated within the eastern extent, is a Grade II\* building.
- The M42 runs across the central extent of the LCA and forms the western boundary towards its northern extent. The A45 towards the north separates the character area and the Birmingham to Coventry train line also traverses this character area. Other secondary roads run east to west radiating from Solihull out towards the countryside.
- Due to the extent of road infrastructure there is considerable amount of traffic noise within this area. The northern extent of the area is also subjected to air traffic noise being in close proximity to the Birmingham International Airport.
- The poor footpath network in this area is noted particularly to the north of the A45 and south of Shadowbrook Lane.
- Electricity pylon lines both to the east and west of the M42 add detracting vertical elements to the landscape. The M42 Junction 6 approach roads along with the convergence of the pylon lines and the rail infrastructure dominate the landscape.

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## Sensitivities and Pressures:

- Views of business parks and their associated infrastructure detract from the rural character of the area.
- The straight edges of the M42 fragment the landscape and forms an east west barrier to accessing the wider countryside.
- Possible increased pressure for access to open countryside from edge of Solihull may impact upon the rural character of the area.
- Limited recreation opportunities in the area. Public rights of way are absent within the areas to the north of Coventry Road and to the south of Solihull Road.
- Loss of biodiversity through intensive farming and land management.
- Pressure for new housing in this attractive commuter area close to Solihull and the M42 corridor.
- Noise from the railway line, Birmingham International Airport, M42 corridor and other major infrastructure impacts upon the tranquillity of the area.
- Future pressure from the proposed HS2 and associated interchange within the northern extent of the LCA.
- The northern extent of this area is safeguarded as an area for the search for mineral extraction, which may in the future change the landscape character.

## Guidelines:

### ***Aim: To protect the landscape pattern characteristic of the area.***

- Encourage appropriate management to retain strong hedgerow structure and the planting of individual trees along field boundaries.
- Resist loss of field boundaries to retain irregular field pattern to south of area. Promote proactive management of existing woodland and planting of new areas to fit with landscape pattern in particular trees and woodland at the urban edge.
- Create links between existing woodland following watercourses and enhance nature conservation assets to fit with the Solihull Green Infrastructure Study.
- Encourage diversification of habitat conservation areas through appropriate management and enhancement practices.
- Encourage appropriate management of Bickenhill Meadows SSSI.
- As part of future planning applications, identify appropriate access points to the countryside and ensure that new facilities, signs and paths are low-key and respect landscape character.

### ***Aim: To promote understanding of the heritage features in the area and their contribution to landscape character.***

- There is potential to promote connections across the area via the network of footpaths, promote new studies in conjunction with Borough plans and provide interpretation of historic features across the area.
- Protect ancient woodland and develop strategy for proactive enhancement and management. Encourage awareness of the value of the ancient woodland.

### ***Aim: To integrate the M42 corridor and other large scale development in the landscape and reduce its visual impact.***

- Support planting along the corridor of native species appropriate to the character of the area. Linear planting along its length should be avoided that would accentuate the roads presence in the landscape.
- Promote the management of roadside tree planting and links with woodland in the surrounding countryside to improve integration of the M42 corridor in the landscape.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- This landscape is attractive in places and has a mixture of agricultural fields and major transport infrastructure. It has obvious landscape features and a characteristic pattern, although the legibility is interrupted by the large road corridors. The landscape features generally are in good landscape condition. Although this area is characterised by primary road infrastructure such as Motorways, the minor roads have a particularly distinct character being narrow and single track with high hedgerows. Overall, these areas are enclosed and intimate. There are some detracting features including the M42, the A45, overhead cables and electricity pylons.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- The general visibility in this LCA consists of long to medium distance views that are medium level, framed and wide, that are deep with a downwards and horizontal orientation. Open views across fields are a key feature of the area and can be particularly noted along Diddington Lane and Shadowbrook Lane. Some of the views across the area have a well treed backdrop. There is a strong relationship with Hampton in Arden to the eastern extent of the LCA.

## Landscape Value:

- The value of this landscape is considered to be **Low**.
- Although the area features listed buildings, the overall character of the area is dominated by transport infrastructure and provides a utilitarian function with limited recreational and amenity opportunities. It is an area of high potential for improvements and enhancement opportunities.

## Landscape Capacity:

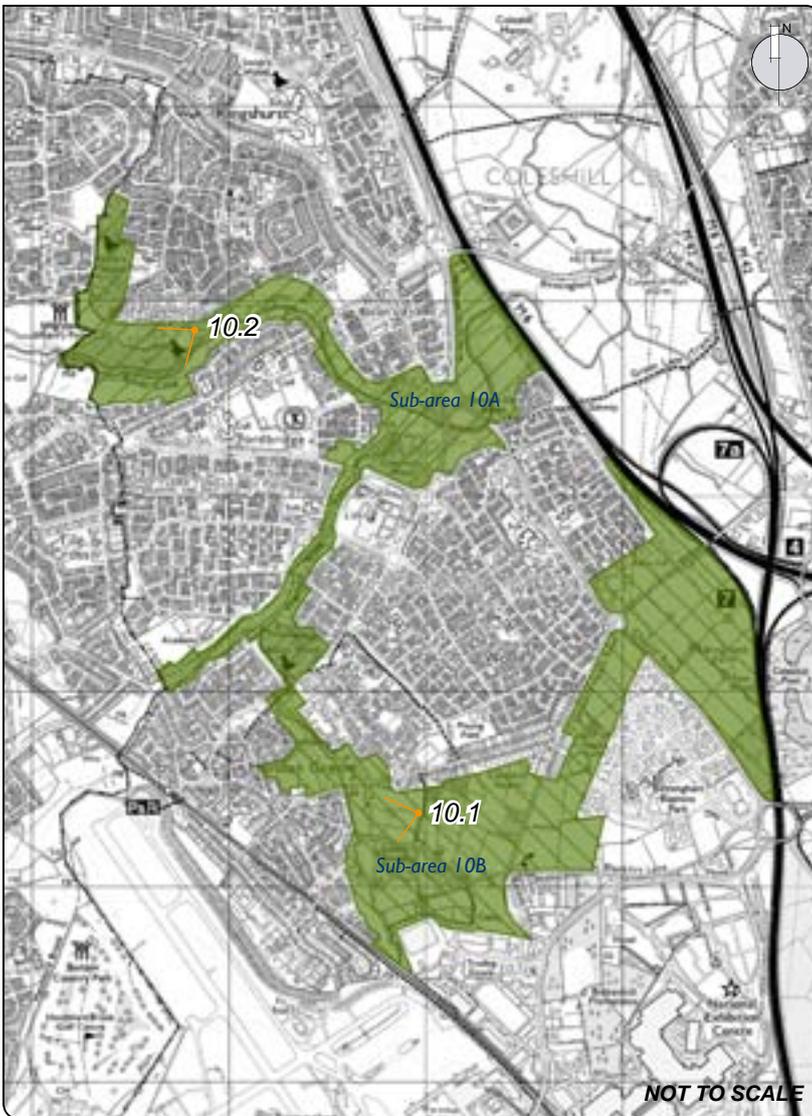
- As stated in our methodology and in line with the current guidance, it is not possible to establish a definitive baseline sensitivity to change without having details of a given development proposal. However, for the purpose of this report a general assessment of the LCA's capacity to accommodate change has been undertaken. This should be used as a guide only, and will need to be re-assessed once details of any proposed development and site location are known.
- Being of **Medium** overall landscape sensitivity and **Medium** landscape value, suggests that the LCA would typically have an overall **Low** landscape capacity to accommodate.
- The LCA supports an attractive landscape in some areas with other parts being dominated by transport infrastructure. This area being in close proximity to Birmingham and Solihull and with extensive road network is more likely to be subjected to future pressures of development.
- This area is likely be able to accommodate some forms of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and features of the area. Any new developments should not result in the loss of the irreplaceable habitats, recreational and amenity value. Development should also respect and enhance the setting of Hampton in Arden and avoid further ribbon development that may encroach upon the rural character of the area.

**Table 29: Overall Sensitivity for LCA 9– Motorway Corridor: Medium**

		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	<b>Medium</b>	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

**Table 30: Landscape Capacity for LCA 9– Motorway Corridor: Low**

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ None	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	<b>Low</b>	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



# LCA Urban Green Spaces 10



**Photograph 10.1:**

Green space within this LCA provides important recreation and amenity for the local community, such as at Marston Green Recreation Ground.



**Photograph 10.2:**

Babb's Mill Park and lake adjacent to the River Cole has good ecological and amenity value. It is part of the Kingfisher Country Park which weaves through this part of the Borough and helps define this LCA.

## Description:

This area covering approximately 3km<sup>2</sup> comprises a series of open spaces and green wedges within an urban area, that provide vital recreational, wildlife and nature conservation opportunities to the townspeople.

This area largely comprises managed green spaces including parks, recreation grounds, sports fields, cemetery, allotments and woodland as typical of the peri-urban fringe. Extensive tree cover sets this area apart from the remaining urban area to the north east of Solihull.

This area has a strong network of footpaths being part of a series of recreational routes, however, west of Chester Road the number of footpaths decline significantly such that the area does not provide any form of public access to the countryside.

The northern part of this character area comprises the Kingfisher Country Park, which follows the valley of the River Cole through to Birmingham. The area also features the Cole Valley Way, a 7-mile recreational route. This park is a designated Local Nature Reserve and features areas of ancient woodland.

This character area has been further divided into two sub-areas:

- Sub-Area LCA 10A; and
- Sub-Area LCA 10B.

## Key Characteristics:

### Geology, soils and drainage:

Majority of the LCA:

- Largely permeable alluvial and glaciofluvial deposits of sands and gravels predominantly following the watercourses, naturally wet with shallow groundwater.
- Geology is Mudstone of Mercia Mudstone Group.

Small northeast and central section covering Marston Green:

- Slowly permeable clayey silty soils, seasonally wet with impeded drainage.
- Geology is Mudstone of Mercia Mudstone Group.

### Landform and Drainage Pattern:

- Generally flat landform ranging from 80m to 100m AOD.
- River Cole to the north, Kingshurst Brook and Low Brook to the south, which together form the characteristic drainage pattern of the character area. These watercourses are supplemented with Babbs Mill Lake, Meriden Lake, ditches and other smaller ponds and pools.

**Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife:**

- Much of the land within this area is used for recreation. Agriculture, deciduous woodland and cemetery use also exist.
- Tree cover is extensive large due to the strong presence of woodlands and tree lined waterways especially Low Brook. Hedgerows and scattered trees within the fields are also distributed across the area.
- Medium to large scale fields of a regular pattern are present within the southern part of the character area.
- A large extent of this character area supports Local Wildlife Sites including York's Wood, Chelmsley Wood, Alcott Wood and Coleshill Pool Wood are also ancient woodlands.
- A number of Local Nature Reserves span this area, that are important green infrastructure features.
- There are four principal parks located here, namely Meriden Park, Cole Bank Park, Babbs Mill Park and Marston Green Recreation Ground.

**Settlement, built environment and communications:**

- There are some active farms within the southern section of the character area and some high-rise residential development within the area to the north. There is no major settlement in the area, it is contained by the urban edge of Solihull and therefore heavily influenced by its presence.
- Electricity pylons are detracting elements to the west of Chester Road.
- Straight roads feature within this area, however the north-western extent has limited connections owing to the presence of the woodland and country park. Road infrastructure is a dominant feature specifically in the southern and eastern extent of the area.
- Strong network of footpaths, possibly due to its location and function as a green space at the edge of an urban area, providing requisite recreational routes and therefore of considerable value.

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**Sensitivities and Pressures:**

- Views of business parks and their associated facilities detract from the character of this area.
- Pressure for development within the area is evident at Babbs Mill could lead to a loss of landscape character and impact upon the ancient woodlands across the area.
- The landscape at the urban edge is sensitive to loss of tree cover and is important to the setting of the settlement and providing essential green connections to the countryside.
- Maintenance of public rights of way, which are prone to erosion and saturation.
- Noise from the M6 and associated road network, airport infrastructure and air traffic impacts upon the overall tranquillity of the area.
- Expansion of Birmingham Business Park is likely to reduce amount of green space.
- Pressure from the proposed of HS2 and associated infrastructure within the LCA.

## Guidelines:

### ***Aim: To protect the green space and landscape pattern characteristic of the area.***

- Protect the strong tree-lined river corridor and its tributaries, which offer vital green linkages within the urban area. Liaise with SMBC Parks to ensure appropriate management for recreation and wildlife.
- Promote proactive management of existing woodland and maintain the value it holds as green wedges extending into the urban area. Adhere to the requirements of the Solihull Woodland Strategy.
- Protect links between existing woodland following watercourses and enhance their nature conservation value to fit with Solihull Green Infrastructure Study.
- Explore opportunities to build further links between the many woodlands across the area to create a better connected woodland network.
- Opportunities to improve existing habitats and create new ones such as species rich grassland should be sought.
- Retain the offset and overlapping nature of woodlands and belts of trees.
- Encourage the enhancement of tree cover through the planting of new woodlands and belts of trees.

### ***Aim: To manage access for recreation at the urban edge.***

- Promote the enhancement of the footpath network and its contribution to landscape character and appreciation of the special qualities of the area.
- Enhance accessibility to the area through development proposals where opportunities exist.
- Explore opportunities to improve public enjoyment of the area, through access agreements following appropriate routes, that would cause minimal disturbance.

### ***Aim: To promote understanding of the heritage features in the area and their contribution to landscape character.***

- Identify heritage features of interest and develop strategy for their protection to promote greater awareness of the overall historic value of the area.
- Resist any development that would risk the character of the river landscape and its historic value.
- Encourage awareness of the value of the ancient woodlands. New planting should be encouraged to diversify age structure.
- Protect the landscape setting of the River Cole, which is a key feature of the area.

### ***Aim: To protect the area from large scale development that is likely to impact upon character and special landscape qualities of the area.***

- Promote the management of all new planting areas and links with woodland in the surrounding countryside to improve integration of the urban edge with the outlying landscape.
- Where new development is promoted the design and layout will require detailed consideration to make links with the adjoining landscape, in particular landform and vegetation pattern.
- Consideration must be given to the space between buildings (directly at the urban edge) for robust structure planting opportunities to ensure the overall site is unified with its immediate landscape setting.
- All new development proposals for medium to large scale buildings should be resisted. Smaller scale developments require a landscape scheme as an integral part of a planning application to ensure the impact on landscape character is fully mitigated.
- New development should avoid large scale encroachment to respect the setting of the River Cole and other waterways. The value of the linkages with the green space within the urban area should be given significant weight in the balance of any development decision.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **High**.
- This is an attractive landscape with a strong 'sense of place' and good local connections. The area is distinct in its setting and provides essential green space for the nearby towns people. The waterbodies, including the river corridor, create a strong pattern across the area. The LCA also features agricultural fields that reach right up to the urban edge, which is a unique characteristic. Despite possessing good amenity and recreational value. The area is interrupted and fragmented in parts by the road network and the strong influence of built form. The landscape condition varies between good to fair and there are a number of detracting features including the electricity pylons and the road network within the landscape.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **High**.
- The visibility in this LCA consists of generally medium to short distance views that are framed or wide, some deep with a horizontal orientation. The high hedges and tree lined roads close down views to the wider landscape. The strong tree cover and woodland is a key visual feature that forms the background for many of the views. Prevention of coalescence is very important and this area has a very strong relationship with existing built form.

## Landscape Value:

- The value of this character area is considered to be **High**.
- Large parts of the area comprise the Kingfisher Country Park and there are a number of Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves and ancient woodlands that add further value to the area. This is an area of regionally distinctive landscape elements with limited potential for substitution that provide important recreation and amenity facilities at the urban edge.

## Landscape Capacity:

- Consistent with current guidance, it is not possible to establish a definitive baseline sensitivity to change without having details of a given development proposal. However, for the purpose of this report a general assessment of the LCA's capacity to accommodate change has been undertaken. This should be used as a guide only, and will need to be re-assessed once details of any proposed development and site location are known.
- This LCA being of **High** overall landscape sensitivity and **High** landscape value, suggests that the LCA would typically have an overall **Very Low/None** landscape capacity to accommodate change.
- The LCA covers large areas of ancient woodland, Local Wildlife Sites, Country Park, important waterways and is of high amenity and recreational value. The area also serves as an important green space to Solihull and as a buffer region between the M6 and the urban edge.
- Overall, this character area has very limited capacity to accommodate new areas of development, due to the limited space and high landscape value. Coalescence around the edges of Solihull needs to be prevented and this area should be preserved and protected. Loss of the irreplaceable habitats and green space within the character area would be detrimental to its character.

Table 31: Overall Sensitivity for LCA 10 – Urban Green Spaces: **High**

		Landscape Character Sensitivity				
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low	
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low	
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/Negligible	

Table 32: Landscape Capacity for LCA 10 – Urban Green Spaces: **Very Low/None**

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity				
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low	
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/None	Very Low	Low	Medium	
	Medium	Very Low	Low	Low	Medium	
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High	
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	



## Sub-Area 10A



**Photograph 10A.1:**

The northern parts of Kingfisher Country Park broadly follow the course of the River Cole which lends a strong riverine character to green spaces such as Meriden Park.



**Photograph 10A.2:**

Babbs Mill Lake is a substantial water body and a key attraction for local wildlife and for public amenity.

### Description:

This sub-area consists of the northern part of LCA 10: Urban Green Spaces extending in a westerly direction away from the M6, forming two diverging corridors along the River Cole and Kingshurst Brook. The sub-area extends into the urban area providing a series of essential green spaces for the people of Solihull.

The sub-area consists of several local wildlife sites, nature reserves, ancient woodland, watercourses and the Kingfisher Country Park and is a narrow area bordered by the urban edge.

Extensive footpaths and cycleways run through the area, with very well used and intensely managed green spaces. Roads are generally limited to the boundaries of the area although, the A452 passes across the area close to its eastern edge.

### Key Characteristics:

- River Cole valley, providing good amenity and ecological value to the area.
- A number of Local Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves including three ancient woodlands at York's Wood, Chelmsley Wood and Alcott Wood.
- Tree lined river corridor bordering the River Cole in contrast to the Kingshurst Brook corridor, which is generally more open.
- Poplar shelter belts and willows dominate the vegetation cover close to the water areas.
- Large water bodies along the river corridor are a key feature in the area.
- Some high-rise residential developments lie within the area; their setting with the fencing and bins are incongruous to the sub-area.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of the LCA is considered to be **High**.
- The sub-area supports an attractive landscape with distinct landscape features such as extensive recreation areas, water corridors, lakes and a strong cycle network. The landscape is largely unified although the impact of the high-rise development disrupts this unity. It is a generally harmonious landscape, although the road infrastructure to the east conflicts with the landscape pattern. A few detractors including noise and litter specifically around the picnic area at Babbs Mill Lake are present. The landscape condition varies between good to fair with some areas in need of management particularly around Babbs Mill Lake.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of the LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- The visibility in the LCA consists of generally medium distance views that are low level, wide-framed, deep and both downward and upward in orientation. There are some picturesque views along the river corridor and the lakes have designated scenic viewing points.

**Table 33: Overall Sensitivity for Sub-Area 10A: High**

		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

## Landscape Value:

- The value of the sub-area is considered to be **High**.
- This is a regionally distinctive landscape comprising the Kingfisher Country Park that supports valued characteristics including extensive areas of ancient woodland, wildlife habitats and amenity and recreational value.

## Landscape Capacity:

- The sub-area would typically have an overall **Very Low/None** landscape capacity to accommodate change.
- Overall, the sub-area would only be able to accommodate new areas of development where the existing impacts already conflict with the landscape pattern, due to its high value and limited width. The landscape of the sub-area needs to be preserved and avoid any loss of green space and its setting should also be respected.

**Table 34: Landscape Capacity for Sub-Area 10A: Very Low/None**

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ None	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	Low	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



## Sub-Area 10B



**Photograph 10B.1:**

Managed green spaces are a feature of this sub-area, such as Marston Green Park.



**Photograph 10B.2:**

An intimate and enclosed character is created by strong tree cover.

### Description:

This sub-area consists of the southern part of LCA 10: Urban Green Spaces extending south and east from Moorend Avenue to the M6. The sub-area extends into the urban area providing a series of essential green spaces for the Solihull towns people.

The sub-area consists mainly of arable fields, woodland and managed green spaces including the Marston Green Recreation Ground and Marston Green Park. The southern extent of the area, although in close proximity to urban edge, is generally tranquil and has an intimate sense of enclosure despite the influences of the surrounding built development. Further towards the east of the sub-area along Coleshill Heath Road and closer to the M42 corridor, it tends to be busy and dominated by the impacts of the major transport infrastructure across the area.

Although, the road network is well developed, the number of public footpaths are limited with almost no public accessibility to the eastern extent of the sub-area.

### Key Characteristics:

- Green managed spaces, as a result of urban influences. These include playing fields, school grounds, cemetery and Marston Green Park, which is a Local Nature Reserve.
- Small to medium scale arable fields of a regular pattern with two active farms.
- Small pockets of deciduous woodland scattered across the sub-area.
- Limited public footpaths, although where in existence they are well sign posted.
- High hedges along the roads with fast moving traffic towards the east.
- Intimate and enclosed character within the western extent of the sub-area with overhanging trees along some roads. Strong tree cover in general across the sub-area.
- Poplar shelterbelts add to the character of the area at Marston Green.
- Constant road and aeroplane noise form background disturbance within the sub-area, which is more prevalent to the eastern extent in contrast to the west.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of the sub-area is considered to be **Medium**.
- The sub-area supports a combination of attractive areas including the Marston Green Park. The legibility of the landscape pattern in the area is vague although its character is distinct due to its geographical setting reaching up to the urban edge. The landscape is fragmented by the roads and other built influences which results in the unbalanced nature of the landscape. There are some detractors including road and air traffic noise, electricity pylons and litter specifically around Marston Green. The landscape condition varies between good to fair with some fields in need of management particularly around the Marston Green cricket ground.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of the sub-area is considered to be **Low**.
- The visibility in this sub-area consists of generally short distance views that are wide-framed, shallow and horizontal in orientation. There are some views towards commercial/employment buildings within the landscape and glimpses of the M42 from some parts of the sub-area. The tree lined roads close down views across the area. Prevention of coalescence is important within this sub-area, which has a very strong relationship with existing built form.

## Landscape Value:

- The value of the sub-area is considered to be **Medium**.
- This is a locally distinctive landscape containing valued characteristics including the Marston Green Park Local Nature Reserve and the other recreational grounds. It is of good amenity and recreational value and provides vital green space in a largely built up area.

Table 35: Overall Sensitivity for Sub-Area 10B: Medium

		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	<b>Medium</b>	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

## Landscape Capacity:

- The sub-area would typically have an overall **Low** landscape capacity to accommodate change.
- Overall, the sub-area would be able to accommodate some areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness of the area. Any new developments should not result in the loss of the irreplaceable habitats or reduce the amount of green space.

Table 36: Landscape Capacity for Sub-Area 10B: Low

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ None	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	<b>Low</b>	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High

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Appendix A: Methodology

Appendix B: Landscape Character Baseline

Appendix C: Stakeholder Workshop Consultation

Appendix D: Landscape Character Area Map

Appendix E: Bibliography

Appendix F: Glossary

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## Guidance and Approach

- A.1. The aim of the landscape character assessment was to gain an overall understanding of the character and visual amenity of the Borough of Solihull and its wider landscape setting and to establish the following:
- Landscape character areas (LCA) within the borough that have homogenous characteristics within each LCA, while being distinct from each other;
  - Key landscape and visual characteristics and sensitivity;
  - Landscape value of each area based largely on designations;
  - Condition of the landscape from observation in the field;
  - An overall assessment of the sensitivity of each LCA to change; and
  - Commentary on each LCA's capacity to accommodate change and relevance to landscape policy.
- A.2. The methodology for the assessment was based on current best practice and guidance from the following sources:
- 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment'<sup>1</sup>, Natural England, 2014;
  - 'TOPIC PAPER 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity'<sup>2</sup>, The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002; and
  - 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment'<sup>3</sup>, Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), Third Edition, 2013.
- A.3. The Landscape Character Assessment project was managed by the Places Directorate – Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) through the following means:
- Liaison by phone and meetings;
  - Work programme;
  - Correspondence by email; and
  - Draft submissions.

## Baseline Studies

- A.4. The baseline work adopted for the landscape character assessment comprised a combination of desktop and field studies to identify and record the character, elements, features and aesthetic and perceptual factors, including the landscape condition and value.

### Spatial Scope:

- A.5. In determining an appropriate scale and extent of the study area for the landscape character assessment, it is important to distinguish between the urban areas and the countryside within the Borough. In consultation with SMBC the study area limit was defined to be the area within the administrative boundary of SMBC, but excluded the urban settlements of Solihull, Shirley, Dickens Heath, Cheswick Green, Hockley Heath, Dorridge, Catherine-de-Barnes, Hampton in Arden, Meriden and Balsall Common. Although these areas were excluded for the purpose of the assessment, the settlement edges and their influence on the wider landscape was considered and incorporated into the evaluation process.

### Desk Based Study:

- A.6. The initial stage of the Landscape Character Assessment involved a desktop study of available planning, landscape character assessment and other relevant studies and strategies relating to the Borough. Detailed analysis of the documents consulted can be found within Appendix B: Landscape Character Baseline.
- A.7. Desk-based information was also gathered from SMBC in the form of GIS data that included the Warwickshire Historic Landscape Character, Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Principle Parks, Agriculture Grades and other landscape relevant information.

A.8. The baseline information gathered for the purposes of the assessment also included:

- Aerial imagery;
- Topography;
- Soils;
- Geology;
- Drainage;
- Vegetation cover;
- Field size and patterns;
- Designations;
- Historic environment
- Settlement patterns;
- Land use; and
- Access

A.9. The GIS data along with the topics mentioned above was then reviewed as a series of maps in order to identify the pattern of landscape features that would help define the draft division of Landscape Character Areas for the Borough.

### Field Study:

A.10. Field study allows the verification of the information collated during the desk-based study. It also provides an opportunity to gather further information to supplement the assessment. Some of the key activities within the field study included:

- Identifying and refining the Landscape Character Area boundaries;
- Analysing and recording the visual, aesthetic and perceptual element;
- Collecting photographic evidence;
- Recording the condition of the landscape;
- Identifying and assessing any other specific feature and/or problems in areas of particular pressure; and
- Noting other distinctive features, local vernacular, plant species, materials etc.

A.11. Survey sheets (as seen in Figure A.1) were used to record the information collected during the survey for each Landscape Character Area to ensure uniformity through the survey. The field survey was carried out over a period from August to November 2016, visiting all areas identified within the study area.

A.12. The recorded survey sheets along with the photographs were used to assist with the further analysis of each Landscape Character Area.

### Landscape Characterisation Process:

A.13. Combining the desk-based study and field study, distinct Landscape Character Areas were identified. As a consequence of the assessment process ten Landscape Character Areas were determined. The field survey sheets and photographs provide an evidence base for the key characteristics and description of the LCAs that have been provided within the Landscape Character Assessment report.

A.14. It should be noted that although boundaries have been drawn to delineate the Landscape Character Areas, these lines are not definitive and should be seen as transitional. There will be a certain amount of overlap in the characteristics between the neighbouring areas in close proximity to the boundary. Development applications for LVIA purposes should consider the landscape character not only of the area within which it is sited, but also take into consideration all neighbouring LCAs. It should also be recognized that these boundaries are subject to change over time as defining elements may alter and shift as a result of landscape change.

### Consultation:

A.15. As an integral part of the Landscape Character Assessment process, a stakeholder workshop was held in September 2016. The aim of the workshop was to consult relevant bodies with an interest or stake in the landscape of the Borough and draw on their local knowledge. A summary of the stakeholder workshop can be found in Appendix C.

A.16. Following consultation, a second site visit was conducted towards the end of September 2016 to incorporate the suggestion of sub-areas within three of the Landscape Character Areas.

Figure A.1: Example of a Field Survey Sheet

Baseline Analysis – Field Survey Checklist

LCA: .....

Landform					
Form	Lowland	Upland		Valley	
Flat Undulating Rolling Steep sloping	Plain Lowland Drumlin Escarpment	Plateau Ridge Knoll Rounded Hilltop		Broad U Valley Narrow V Valley Deep Gorge Gully	
Landscape Elements					
Water bodies	Land Uses			Industry	
Pond Lake Reservoir Dam Stream River Canal Ditches	Arable Ley/improved Semi improved Permanent pasture Rough grazing Orchard/horticulture Scrub/bracken Rights of Common	Parkland Deciduous woodland Mixed woodland Coniferous plantation Commercial forestry Moor/heathland Urban common Horsiculture	Recreation ground Country park Golf course Fishery Water park Sewage works Water works Airfield	Mineral extraction Waste disposal Light industrial Heavy industrial Energy generation Oil and / or gas Refinery/storage Gas terminal	
Other elements	Built elements	Vertical elements	Transport routes	Leisure facilities	
Hedgerow Hedgerow tree Tree clump Copse Shelter belt Stone walls Brick walls Post and wire Fences Earth banks	Farm building Church Castle Stately home Hamlet Village Town City Housing estate Industrial estate	Wind turbine Windmill/wind pump Communication mast Electricity pylons 11/33kv poles and wires Telegraph poles Chimneys Cooling towers Flare stacks Lighthouse/beacon	Motorway Main A/trunk Road B road Minor roads/lanes Tracks Bridleway Cycleway Footpath Railway station/line Airport	Scenic Viewpoint Picnic site Camping site Caravan site Riding stable Sports/leisure centre Miniature railways Canal/boat trips Museum Historic building	
Landscape Patterns					
Settlement	Field patterns	Roads	Woodlands		
Dispersed Nucleated Liner	Unenclosed Small/medium/large Irregular/regular	Grid Follow contours Random/winding	Follow contours In valleys Plantation blocks	Linear shelterbelts Random/scattered	
Historical features					
Sites/remains	Agricultural	Industrial	Routes	Earthworks	
Castles (remains of) Motte & bailey Battle (site of) Moats Roman fort/villa	Field pattern Field boundaries Ridge and furrow Fish pond Marl pit/pond	Quarry (dis) Pits (dis) Dismantled railway De watered canal	Green lane Droving route Trackway	Hill forts/settlements Earth works Tumuli (burial mound) Standing stones Cairns	
Views					
Distance	Elevation	Width		Depth	Orientation
Long distance Medium distance Short distance	Elevated/high level Medium level Low level	Panoramic (360°) Framed (90°) Fragmented	Wide (180°) Contained (45°)	Deep Shallow	Downwards Horizontal Upwards
Attractors (positive features/elements)			Detractors (negative features/elements)		
Landscape Quality	High	Medium	Low	Very low	
Clarity	Very clear	Clear	Vague	Muddled	
Distinctiveness	Distinct	Obvious	Indistinct	Obscure	
Intactness	Unified	Interrupted	Fragmented	Remnant	
Balance	Harmonious	Balanced	Unbalanced	V Unbalanced	
Condition	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	
Detractors	A few	Some	Several	Many	
Attractors	Several	Some	A few	None	

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# Assessment of Overall Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Value

- A.17. Following the identification of the Landscape Character Areas and noting the description of existing elements, features, characteristics, character and quality within the study area, a further analysis of each LCA was undertaken to determine the following:
- Overall Landscape Sensitivity – derived from combining Landscape Character Sensitivity and Visual Sensitivity;
  - Landscape Value – derived largely from designated landscape or features and local associations; and
  - Landscape Capacity – derived from combining the results of the Overall Landscape Sensitivity with the defined Landscape Value.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity

- A.18. Overall Landscape Sensitivity is defined as the sensitivity of the landscape and does not take into account or represent any type of change that may be under consideration. Overall Landscape Sensitivity is made up of essentially two components:
- Landscape Character Sensitivity; and
  - Visual Sensitivity.

## Landscape Character Sensitivity

- A.19. Landscape Character Sensitivity is defined as the sensitivity of the landscape resource which includes individual elements/ features contributing to the character and the character as a whole. Landscape Character Sensitivity is judged on certain factors including:
- Natural Factors;
  - Cultural Factors;
  - Landscape Quality; and
  - Aesthetic Factors.
- A.20. Criteria used to assess the Landscape Character Sensitivity is set out in Table A.1.

**Table A. I: Landscape Character Sensitivity Criteria**

Landscape Character Sensitivity	Classification Criteria	
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractive landscape with a sense of place and national/ regional recognition or strong local connection to place.</li> <li>• Distinctive structure, characteristic patterns, harmonious relationship between landform and land cover.</li> <li>• Unified landscape promotes social interaction with high levels of activity and few conflicts between traffic and pedestrian movements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate land management with limited scope to improve and in very good landscape condition.</li> <li>• Evident use of good quality locally characteristic materials and detailing.</li> <li>• Distinct features worthy of conservation.</li> <li>• A few detracting features.</li> </ul>
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typical and unremarkable landscape, however with local connection to place.</li> <li>• Obvious structure, characteristic patterns, balanced combination of landform and land cover.</li> <li>• Opportunities for social interaction limited to specific 'community' locations leading to an interrupted landscape.</li> <li>• Traffic circulation often controls pedestrian movement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope to improve land management.</li> <li>• Good landscape condition.</li> <li>• Some areas of local distinctiveness, elsewhere widespread use of standard materials and detailing.</li> <li>• Remnant distinctive features may no longer be in context.</li> <li>• Some detracting features.</li> </ul>
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monotonous / uniform landscape in poor condition or decline with little or no obvious local connection to place.</li> <li>• Indistinct structure and characteristic patterns often masked by mixed land use creating an unbalanced relationship between landform and land cover.</li> <li>• Fragmented landscape with poor boundary definition and arbitrary 'disowned' space.</li> <li>• Development is often unsympathetic in scale.</li> <li>• Few opportunities for social interaction, unwelcoming or even threatening.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport infrastructure may inhibit or severely constrain pedestrian movement.</li> <li>• Lack of management has resulted in degradation.</li> <li>• Fair landscape condition.</li> <li>• Derelict land requiring treatment.</li> <li>• Inappropriate use of materials, poorly located infrastructure or use of materials with a limited life span.</li> <li>• Several detracting features.</li> </ul>
Very Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broken and degraded landscape in poor condition with no sense of place.</li> <li>• Degraded structure/ characteristic patterns masked by mixed land use.</li> <li>• Unbalanced relationship between landform and land cover.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of land management has resulted in degradation and in poor landscape condition.</li> <li>• Many detracting features.</li> </ul>

### Visual Sensitivity

A.21. Visual Sensitivity is the assessment of a combination of factors including the type and nature of the view, visibility, the number and nature of people (visual receptors) who may experience the landscape visually.

A.22. The classification criteria for Visual Sensitivity is set out in Table A.2:

**Table A.2: Visual Sensitivity Criteria**

Visual Sensitivity	Classification Criteria
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationship with existing urban built form: <i>Very strong</i></li> <li>Prevention of coalescence: <i>Very important</i></li> <li>Scope to mitigate development: <i>Wide range of opportunities</i></li> <li>Openness to public &amp; private views: <i>Long distance; Elevated/ high level/ panoramic (360 degrees); Wide (180 degrees); Deep; Downwards.</i></li> </ul>
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationship with existing urban built form: <i>Strong</i></li> <li>Prevention of coalescence: <i>Important</i></li> <li>Scope to mitigate development: <i>Some opportunities</i></li> <li>Openness to public &amp; private views: <i>Medium distance; Medium level; Framed (90 degrees); Contained (45 degrees); Shallow; Horizontal.</i></li> </ul>
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationship with existing urban built form: <i>Weak</i></li> <li>Prevention of coalescence: <i>Minor role</i></li> <li>Scope to mitigate development: <i>Little opportunity</i></li> <li>Openness to public &amp; private views: <i>Short distance; Low level; Fragmented; Upwards.</i></li> </ul>
Very Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationship with existing urban built form: <i>None</i></li> <li>Prevention of coalescence: <i>Not important</i></li> <li>Scope to mitigate development: <i>No opportunity</i></li> <li>Openness to public &amp; private views: <i>Limited or no view.</i></li> </ul>

### Overall Landscape Sensitivity

A.23. The two principal criteria, Landscape Character Sensitivity and Visual Sensitivity, are combined and set out within Table A.3 which is used to establish the classification of the Overall Landscape Sensitivity of each Landscape Character Area.

**Table A.3: Overall Landscape Sensitivity Criteria**

		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible

## Landscape Value

A.24. The likely value of the character areas is based on which users may value the areas, and where relevant, any statutory, non-statutory or local plan designations.

A.25. Landscape value is associated with a recognisable and demonstrable use, and can relate not only to historic and cultural importance, but also social, recreational and community value. The presence of combinations of attributes along with scale of importance should be considered when ascribing the landscape value.

A.26. The factors and criteria influencing the value of the landscape are set out in Table A.4

**Table A.4: Landscape Value**

Landscape Value	Geographical Scale of Importance	Classification Criteria	Typical Example
High	National / Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape or element therein of distinctive value, rich cultural associations and a recognised high level of importance.</li> <li>Limited potential for substitution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Parks</li> <li>Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty</li> <li>Listed Buildings</li> <li>Scheduled Monuments</li> </ul>
Medium	Regional / District / Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locally distinctive landscape or element therein of moderately valued characteristics, or moderately valued components.</li> <li>Some potential for substitution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designated areas by local authorities e.g. special landscape areas and Conservation Areas</li> <li>Undesignated but value expressed through historical or cultural associations or through demonstrable use.</li> </ul>
Low	District / Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape or element therein similar to many other areas with little remaining indication of local distinctiveness. Low importance and rarity.</li> <li>High potential for improvements/substitution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remnant landscape features may remain but are degraded or out of context. Potential for enhancement.</li> <li>Commercial, industrial or disused area providing little value to the community or residents</li> </ul>
Very Low	Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape or element therein of very low importance, which may include damaged or derelict landscape.</li> <li>Would benefit from improvements/substitution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Areas identified for recovery, often vandalised and rarely used by the community.</li> </ul>

## Landscape Capacity

- A.27. Landscape Capacity is defined as the ability of a landscape to accommodate varying amounts of change or development of a specific type without changing or having significant effects on the overall character and visual amenity of the area. It is generally derived from combining the levels assigned to each area for Overall Landscape Sensitivity and for Landscape Value, with a consideration as to the type of development.
- A.28. The implication of the definition outlined above, and in line with current guidance, capacity studies must be site and development specific in order to be relevant and of use within development planning. The ability of the individual landscape character areas to accommodate change (sensitivity to change and landscape capacity) requires a more detailed assessment focused on site allocations and descriptions of expected development types.
- A.29. The distinct characteristics or features of an area can have a varying sensitivity to change. This will depend on the nature of the change proposed and in particular, how suitable or characteristic the proposed change is compared to the receiving landscape. This assessment therefore will only be able to suggest a general assessment of the 'Landscape Capacity' based on the matrix set out in Table A.5. This general scoring will need to be reviewed when details of specific development proposals are known for specific sites.

**Table A.5: Landscape Capacity Rating**

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ None	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	Low	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High

# Appendix B: Landscape Character Baseline

## Introduction

- B.1. The purpose of this report is to summarise the policy and guidance framework of existing landscape character assessment studies and provide an initial Character Baseline Report to form the basis of a comprehensive Landscape Character Assessment and in assessing the sensitivities and capacity of each identified character area.
- B.2. This report has been prepared to allow SMBC an opportunity to view and comment on the information sources Waterman propose to draw upon during the development of a comprehensive Landscape Character Assessment. It also provides an opportunity for SMBC to understand the gaps in the information sources required to develop the landscape character baseline that underpins all the studies. The report also provides a position statement which the Council can refer to in the interim period between the work on Landscape Character Assessment being commissioned and completed.
- B.3. This Character Baseline Report aims to complete the following tasks:
- Summarise current best practice, guidance and policy regarding the environment, landscape character and visual impact assessment, character and capacity assessments;
  - Summarise the SMBC existing evidence relating to character;
  - Evaluate the usefulness/appropriateness of the Council's existing evidence relating to character plan making and in decision taking;
  - Make recommendations as to the scale of work required in updating these key pieces of background evidence if appropriate; and
  - Indicate the national and local data sets and studies to be used to inform the Local Character Guide and a comprehensive Landscape Character Assessment.

## Character Context

- B.4. The published data sources Waterman propose to review when producing the Local Character Guide and a comprehensive Landscape Character Assessment are as follows:

### National Guidance

- National Character Area profiles, Natural England, (2014)

### Regional Planning Guidance

- Warwickshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project (2010)
- Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines, Arden (2003)
- West Midlands Farmsteads & Landscapes Project (2010)
- Airport Master Plan to 2030-Birmingham International Airport (2007)
- Coventry Urban Fringe Coventry City Council Landscape Assessment & Guidance (2007)
- Sub-Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy (2014)

### Local Planning Guidance

- Local Plan (2013)
- Local Plan Review (2016)
- Solihull Settlements Study (2009)
- The North Solihull Green Space Review
- Solihull Countryside Strategy: First Review (2010-2020)
- Solihull Green Infrastructure Study (2012)
- Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2016 to 2026 (2016)
- Urban Characterisation Study (2011)

### HS2 Documents

- HS2 Phase One environmental statement volume 5: landscape and visual assessment

# National Planning Guidance

## National Character Area profiles (Natural England, 2014)

B.5. The National Character Area (NCA) profiles<sup>4</sup> produced by Natural England divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each area is defined by a combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity. Their boundaries follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries.

B.6. Each profile contains a description of a landscape area and details of key characteristics, including:

- Topography;
- Geology and soils;
- Rivers and coastal features;
- Trees and woodland;
- Field patterns and boundary features;
- Agricultural uses;
- Semi-natural habitats;
- Species closely associated with the area;
- History of the area;
- Settlement and development patterns;
- Roads, railways and rights of way;
- Commonly used building materials and building design; and
- Tranquillity and remoteness.

B.7. Natural England state that the information in the profiles can be used in a wide range of activities, including:

- Forming planning policies and taking planning decisions;
- Sensitivity and capacity studies;
- Land management plans;
- Landscape and visual impact assessments;
- Minerals planning;
- Green infrastructure strategies and planning;
- Developing Countryside Stewardship applications;
- Forest and woodland plans and strategies;
- Access and rights of way improvement plans; and
- National park and area of outstanding natural beauty management plans.

B.8. The Borough of Solihull is located within NCA 97

known as Arden, the area profile notes the area comprises farmland and former wood-pasture in areas to the south and east of Birmingham, and that traditionally the Arden area is regarded as the land lying between the River Tame and the River Avon in Warwickshire and that it also extends into north Worcestershire to abut the Severn and Avon Vales. The eastern part of the NCA abuts to the area surrounding Coventry, with the fringes of Warwick and Stratford-upon-Avon to the south.

B.9. The area profile also notes that the land uses in the NCA are mainly, residential, agricultural and industrial including coal mining, which is still active in the north-eastern areas and that numerous transport corridors including road, rail, air and canals run through the area. The NCA also highlights that there is likely to be increased development and greater pressure upon the existing infrastructure, particularly around Birmingham, Coventry and the main towns. Within the NCA the following key landscape characteristics are identified:

- Well-wooded farmland landscape with rolling landform;
- Geologically diverse with rocks ranging from the Precambrian to the Jurassic and overlain by superficial Quaternary deposits;
- Mature oaks, mostly found within hedgerows, together with ancient woodlands, and plantation woodlands that often date from the time of enclosure. Woodlands include historic coppice bounded by woodbanks;
- Narrow, meandering clay river valleys with long river meadows; the River Blythe SSSI lying between the cities of Coventry and Birmingham is a good example of this;
- Numerous areas of former wood-pasture with large, old, oak trees often associated with isolated remnants of more extensive heathlands;
- Diverse field patterns, ranging from well hedged, irregular fields and small woodlands that contrast with larger semi regular fields on former deer park estates;
- Complex and contrasting settlement pattern with some densely populated where traditional settlements have amalgamated to form the major West Midlands conurbation;
- North-eastern industrial area based around former Warwickshire coalfield. North-western area dominated by urban development and associated urban edge

landscapes such as managed greenspace; and

- Transport infrastructure, the M42, M40, M6 and M5 are major transport corridors that sit within the landscape of this NCA.

B.10. The area profile specifically notes that Arden has higher ground to the west comprising the Clent and Lickey Hills and to the east the Nuneaton Ridge and that the landscape of the lower lying central area is gently rolling with small fragmented semi-natural and ancient woodlands. Finally, that mature oaks set in hedgerows, distinctive field boundaries, historic parklands and narrow river corridors are key features, all on the doorstep of a heavily urbanised area.

## Regional Planning Guidance

### Warwickshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project (2010)

B.11. The Warwickshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Project<sup>5</sup> was undertaken by Warwickshire County Council Museum Field Services between May 2006 and March 2010. The Project forms a national programme of Historic Landscape Characterisation funded and administered then by English Heritage (now Historic England). The aim is to achieve an archaeologist's understanding of the historic and cultural origins and development of the present day landscape through a desk-based programme of digital mapping, description and analysis, by the identification of the physical remains visible within the landscape that demonstrate the processes by which it has reached its present form.

B.12. The Project identifies 12 Broad HLC Types for Warwickshire as follows:

- **Fieldsapes:** Areas of land that are identified as being used for some form of agriculture. These are predominantly enclosed land but include medieval open fields as a previous type;
- **Unimproved:** Areas of land that have remained largely unimproved over a period of time;
- **Woodland:** Areas of land that are predominantly covered with trees;
- **Water:** Areas of land that are dominated by water and water related fields;
- **Industrial:** Areas of land that have been identified as having a predominantly

industrial which are not related to the extractive industries;

- **Extractive:** Areas of land that have been identified as being related to the extractive industries;
- **Military:** Military sites;
- **Settlement:** Areas of land that have a predominantly populated and settled character;
- **Designated Landscapes:** Areas of land that have been identified as having a predominantly designed aspect to them including recreational landscapes;
- **Transport:** Areas of land that are related to some form of transportation; and
- **Civic and Commercial:** Areas of land that have a predominantly civic or commercial use.
- **Horticultural:** Areas of land that can be identified as some form of small-scale horticulture. This type includes orchards, allotments and more modern nurseries and garden centres.

### Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines, Arden (1993)

B.13. The Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines<sup>6</sup> were produced by the Warwickshire Landscape Project and provides a set of guidelines to offer advice on maintaining diversity and beauty to conserve the landscapes of the following sub-areas for future generations:

- Borough of Rugby;
- Stratford Towns urban edge; and
- Arden, Avon and Dunsmore.

B.14. The Borough of Solihull is covered by the sub-area known as Arden, which provides guidelines for landscape management and further sub-divides Arden into the following areas:

- **River Valley Wetlands:** Fragmented and often degraded landscape with limited sense of unity. The landscape has been extensively modified;
- **Arden River Valleys:** Narrow and meandering river corridors, flood meadows and riverside trees which combine to form small scale pastoral landscapes. These features evoke a strong sense of naturalness which gives the river landscape a special character now rare elsewhere in Arden;
- **Wooded Estate lands:** Wooded estate land

which are a peripheral Arden landscape characterised by woodland blocks and areas of parkland;

- Arden Parklands: Enclosed wooded landscape created by ancient woodlands and belts of trees;
- Industrial Arden: An urbanised and, in places a degraded landscape where landscape enhancement is a priority;
- Arden Pastures: Landscape with a sense of enclosure provided by an abundance of mature hedgerow trees; and
- Ancient Arden: This landscape is significant as it is the only ancient countryside in Warwickshire. It comprises an irregular landscape pattern in the shape of fields and the network of narrow lanes.

## West Midlands Farmsteads & Landscapes Project (2010)

B.15. The West Midlands Farmsteads & Landscapes Project<sup>7</sup> is a collaborative project led then by English Heritage (now Historic England) in partnership with the region's county and metropolitan councils and with the support of Advantage West Midlands. The Project has:

- Mapped and described the locations and characteristics of over 22, 000 historic farmsteads, how they have changed over time and how they relate to the landscape;
- Described the present use of historic farmsteads and their role in the economy of the West Midlands; and
- Developed a set of planning tools to inform spatial planning, land management and economic development.

## Airport Master Plan to 2030-Birmingham International Airport (2007)

B.16. The Airport Master Plan to 2030<sup>8</sup> sets out the next stages of the Draft Master Plan, which was published on 31 October 2005. The aims and objectives of the Master Plan include to:

- Illustrate how the further development of Birmingham International Airport is consistent with national, regional and local policies;
- Provide a framework for the sustainable development of Birmingham International Airport;

- Assess the implications of the further development of Birmingham International Airport and facilitate the development of a sustainable, multi-modal surface access strategy for the Airport, in conjunction with other agencies, stakeholders and surface access providers;
- Outline the Airport Company's overall approach to sustainability and its proposals for environmental mitigation measures; and
- Inform, and provide, a basis to address the needs of Birmingham International Airport, and its proposed further development, within the statutory Development Plan process.

B.17. The Master Plan commissioned a number of technical studies including a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) covering the proposed future Airport Operational Area and its immediate environs. The LVIA summarises the area as principally supporting farmland, characterised by an enclosed and gently undulating landscape that is defined by woodland edges and belts of trees and hedgerows. The LVIA also finds that the implementation of the Master Plan proposals have the potential to change the landscape character of the area through the regrading of the site and loss of trees and hedgerows over the land occupied by the future Airport Operational Area. The LVIA also finds that other areas of distinct landscape character, surrounding the proposed future Airport Operational Area, would be affected, indirectly, to varying degrees.

## Coventry Urban Fringe Coventry City Council Landscape Assessment & Guidance (2007)

B.18. The Coventry Urban Fringe Coventry City Council Landscape Assessment & Guidance Study<sup>9</sup> was commissioned to evaluate the condition of the landscape within the context of the management guidelines set out within the Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines and the more recent Design Guidelines for Development in Coventry's Ancient Arden.

B.19. The objectives the study were to:

- Review the character and condition of the landscape;
- Review recent management/conservation activity;
- Identify forces for change and management priorities.

## Sub-Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy (2014)

- B.20. The Sub-Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy<sup>10</sup> aim is to provide evidence for the preparation of plans, policies and strategies relating to Green Infrastructure (GI) at a sub-regional level and at a local level. It also details how GI can be delivered with the help from landholders and partners. The strategy covers the disciplines of landscape, biodiversity and accessibility.
- B.21. The report details The main strategic areas of opportunity for strengthening landscape character are identified in the Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines and are still relevant, including opportunities to demonstrate exemplary approaches to landscape conservation management. However, it is recommended that the Enhancement Zones be re-assessed to identify target areas for landscape restoration. In particular, planning and implementing substantial landscape frameworks, well in advance of major developments and transport infrastructure, can bring many benefits, including safeguarding and enhancing vital landscape assets, helping to create a sense of place for new development and retaining vital links with the past.

## Local Planning Policy and Guidance

### Solihull Local Plan (2013)

- B.22. The Solihull Local Plan<sup>11</sup> sets out SMBCs vision of how Solihull will develop future challenges facing Solihull and how they will be addressed, the vision for the future of Solihull, the strategy for achieving the vision, and policies and proposals to enable the Borough to grow and develop. Sites for proposed development are also identified and the Plan has been informed by extensive involvement with a wide range of stakeholders and the community.
- B.23. The Plan includes broad descriptions of the development and landscape profile of the Borough and describes the Borough as being located on the southern edge of the West Midlands Conurbation, between Birmingham and the Black Country in the west and Coventry to the east. The Plan notes that the Rural Area once formed part of a huge area of wood pasture and ancient farm lands known as Arden

and evidence of previous woodland, commons and heaths are often shown in local place names. The Plan also notes that there were also a number of manor houses and halls associated with large parks situated within the Rural Area. Much of the woodland has now been cleared and the landscape character is predominantly agricultural.

- B.24. The Plan notes that twelve key challenges will be applied to the following areas and sets out what the impact of the challenges will mean:
- North Solihull Regeneration Area: An area that has a distinctive urban form characterised by its 1960s 'Radburn' open plan housing estates arranged around parking courtyards, small green spaces and precinct shopping areas;
  - Mature Suburbs: These mature areas are characterised by Victorian and Edwardian development, the canal and railway network, a tighter urban grain and extensive gardens and parks;
  - Solihull Town Centre: Solihull Town Centre is a strong, vibrant and regionally important centre containing a wide variety of shops, businesses and civic services;
  - M42 Economic Gateway: Home to key strategic assets and employers including Birmingham Airport, the National Exhibition Centre, Jaguar Land Rover, Birmingham and Blythe Valley Business Parks as well as more local assets such as Whale Tankers and Solihull Business Park; and
  - Rural Area: The Rural Area generally has a high quality built and natural environment, characterised by its Arden landscape setting, attractive countryside, important green corridors such as its canals and rivers and its rich biodiversity.

- B.25. The Plan then sets out policy themes of the which following are of relevance to the Character Baseline Report:
- Protecting and Enhancing our Environment: This section of the Local Plan sets out SMBCs view on how planning can help achieve sustainable economic growth, protect the natural environment, support the transition to a low carbon economy and to provide resilience to impacts from a changing climate;

- Promoting Quality of Place: The policies contained in this section highlight that the design of development, the conservation and enhancement of the Borough's historic environment and the protection of the Green Belt and the countryside are critical to retaining the quality of Solihull's distinctive places. It also states that most of the undeveloped area of the Borough is designated as Green Belt, where national policy provides a presumption against development that is inappropriate in a rural area. The Borough's Green Belt includes the strategically important open land between the urban areas of Birmingham and Solihull and the city of Coventry, known as the Meriden Gap, and key gaps between urban areas and rural settlements. Protecting the Green Belt in Solihull will contribute to the purposes set out in the national policy; and
- Supporting Local Communities: This section of the Local Plan presents SMBCs policy for creating and supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, attributes that are recognised and is a key element in delivering sustainable development.

B.26. Summaries of relevant policy from the Local Plan are provided below:

- Policy P10 Natural Environment: This policy notes that "The Council will seek to protect, enhance and restore the diverse landscape features of the Borough and to create new woodlands and other characteristic habitats, so as to halt and where possible reverse the degrading of the Arden landscape and promote local distinctiveness";
- Policy P11 Water Management: This policy notes that "All new development shall incorporate sustainable drainage systems, unless it is shown to be impractical to do so. Developers shall ensure that adequate space is made for water within the design layout of all new developments to support the full use of sustainable drainage systems, and shall demonstrate the improvements to the water environment will be maximised through consideration of a range of techniques. Wherever possible, sustainable drainage systems will be expected to contribute towards wider sustainability considerations, including amenity recreation, conservation of biodiversity and landscape character, as well as flood alleviation and water quality control';
- Policy P13 Minerals: This policy notes that "proposals for mineral working or related infrastructure will be assessed against a criteria including "Impact on the environment, landscape, built heritage and archaeology, nature conservation interests, ground and surface water quantity and quality, best and most versatile farmland, agricultural businesses and aerodrome safeguarding";
- Policy P14 Amenity: This policy notes that "the Council will seek to protect and enhance the amenity of existing and potential occupiers of houses, businesses and other uses in considering proposals for new development, and will...Consider the visual and other amenities of potential occupiers and users of new developments close to overhead power lines and substations. Developers will be expected to locate and design new developments so as to minimise the visual and other amenity impacts";
- Policy P15 Securing Design Quality: This policy notes that "All development proposals will be expected to achieve good quality, inclusive and sustainable design" and "Conserve and enhance local character, distinctiveness and streetscape quality and ensure that the scale, massing, density, layout, materials and landscape of the development respect the surrounding natural, built and historic environment";
- Policy P16 Conservation of Heritage Assets and Local Distinctiveness: This policy notes that "Development will be expected to preserve or enhance heritage assets as appropriate to their significance, conserve local character and distinctiveness and create or sustain a sense of place";
- Policy P17 Countryside and Green Belt: This policy notes that "The Council will not permit inappropriate development in the Green Belt, except in very special circumstances";
- Policy P18 Health and Well Being: This policy states that "The potential for achieving positive health outcomes will be taken into account when considering all development proposals. Where any adverse health impacts are identified, the development will be expected to demonstrate how these will be addressed or mitigated"; and

- Policy P20 Provision for Open Space, Children’s Play, Sport, Recreation and Leisure: This policy notes that “The Council recognises the importance and multi-functional benefits of public open space, sports and recreational facilities within the Borough and will support the enhancement of existing facilities and open space. Loss of existing facilities through development will not be permitted where they are of value by the local community for recreation, visual amenity, nature conservation or make an important contribution to the quality of the environment or network of green infrastructure”.

B.27. The relevant policy from the Local Plan is set out in the analysis Table B.1.

### Solihull Local Plan Review

B.28. The Solihull Local Plan covers the period 2011 to 2028. Since the Plan was adopted a legal challenge has resulted in the overall housing requirement being deleted and remitted back to the Council for reconsideration. It is intended that this deficiency be addressed through a review of the Solihull Local Plan. A Scope, Issues & Options consultation was undertaken during Winter 2015/16, and the programme for the Review is set out in the Local Development Scheme, May 2016<sup>12</sup> has been prepared. The Draft Plan also takes into consideration the Government’s plans for high speed rail that are currently passing through Parliament and have reached an advanced stage.

B.29. The Council is preparing the next stage of the Local Plan Review, the Draft Local and the evidence base.

### Solihull Settlements Study (2009)

B.30. The Solihull Settlements Study<sup>13</sup> was undertaken by officers of the Spatial Planning team with assistance from other services areas within the Council, including Transport, Highways, Environment and Education. The Study is intended to achieve the following aims and objectives:

- To provide spatial data on the Borough’s settlements, to inform policy choices as part of the LDF and to help inform decisions on the location of new development;
- To identify, map (using GIS) and collate this key information so that it is easy to update;

- To understand and build a profile of settlements based on socio-economic (health services, schools, shops etc.) and environment factors (character, nature conservation etc.) to help identify any particular local need and to determine what the important key issues are;
- To assess the sustainability of settlements i.e. does the area have enough facilities to sustain its residents every day needs without travelling further away to access them;
- To develop an understanding of the character of places and to prioritise areas requiring additional protection or those in need of enhancement; and
- Provide baseline information for local environmental strategies (including Conservation Area Appraisals, Parish Plans and Village Design Statements).

B.31. With regard to Green Belt the Study notes that all settlements include a number of constraints that need to be taken into account when considering the areas ability to accommodate further growth and development. It notes that in the south Solihull urban area a number of settlements are bordered by Green Belt which will restrict any further expansion. Similarly, all settlements in Solihull’s rural south and east are bordered by Green Belt which will also restrict their further expansion. Finally, the Study notes that in the north Solihull urban area all settlements with the exception of Castle Bromwich include areas of Green Belt within them.

B.32. The Study also notes that settlements making up the north Solihull include a number of nature conservation designations which need to be considered when making decisions about where to locate new development. Similarly, development in settlements that include or are near to flood zones will need to be carefully considered.

B.33. The Study also notes that the Castle Bromwich Conservation Area includes the Grade I Castle Bromwich Hall, that Olton includes the largest conservation area in the Borough and that within Solihull’s rural south and east there are a number of distinguished built heritage and historic environment assets.

## The North Solihull Green Space Review

- B.34. The North Solihull Green Space Review<sup>14</sup> has been produced to evaluate the location, quality and accessibility of green space and develop a strategy that enhances the quality and accessibility (where practicable) of the land available and ensure there will be no overall loss of green space.
- B.35. The Review also notes that green space has a positive role to play in the regeneration of North Solihull, improving the quality of place and meeting the requirements of existing and future residents plus those who work in and visit the Borough.
- B.36. The Review has been informed by the SMBC Green Space Strategy<sup>15</sup>. Of particular relevance is the Zone 6 Action Plan that is within the North Solihull Regeneration area. The Review methodology has been developed by EDAW, working in conjunction with the Council and uses the typologies contained in PPG17 and further supplements them with sub-typologies. For the purposes of the Review the classifications of open space types are as follows:
- SINC (Site of Important Nature Conservation);
  - Play Areas;
  - Principal Parks;
  - Parks;
  - Open Space;
  - Woodland;
  - Local Nature Reserve;
  - Natural Green Space;
  - Churchyard;
  - Allotment;
  - Synthetic Sports Pitches;
  - Sports; and
  - School Grounds.

## Solihull Countryside Strategy 2010-2020

- B.37. The Solihull Countryside Strategy<sup>16</sup> was prepared to control and guide future change in Solihull's countryside to protect and enhance its character and assist the sustainable management of the rural economy within the Borough.
- B.38. In terms of objectives, the Strategy covers the following areas:
- Safeguarding of the countryside as a landscape resource and enhancement of local distinctiveness;
  - Sustainable management of the countryside and the changes to the rural economy;
  - Conservation and enhancement of the character of the countryside, the natural and historic environment, landscape, habitats and wildlife;
  - Protect and enhance ecosystem services;
  - improved access to the countryside and opportunities for leisure, sport and recreation; and
  - Promotion of responsible use and awareness of the value of the countryside as a finite resource.
- B.39. In terms of landscape character, the Strategy sets out an appraisal of Solihull's countryside and highlights that it has many strengths including its quality of being an attractive area where the landscape has been retained with the strong rural character that provides a contrast with adjacent urban areas. The Strategy also highlights how change within in the Borough's countryside is accelerating.

## Solihull Green Infrastructure Study (2012)

- B.40. The Green Infrastructure Study<sup>17</sup> forms part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework for SMBC, particularly in terms of spatial planning within the Core Strategy. The Green Infrastructure Study will provide the evidence base for analysis of potential locations for growth in the Borough and provide opportunities to enhance existing and identify areas for new Green Infrastructure.
- B.41. The objectives of the Study are to:
- Identify the current Green Infrastructure provision and connectivity (publicly accessible and non-accessible) in terms of the following — biodiversity, geodiversity;
  - Identify landscape character, urban forest, historic environment, accessible greenspace, greenspace typologies and links, and flood risk;
  - Identify current Green Infrastructure projects;
  - Produce a current Green Infrastructure function plan and strategic overview; and
  - Make recommendations for future work.
- B.42. The Study sets out the existing Green Infrastructure within the Borough and outlines opportunities and constraints within the following urban, suburban and rural area types:
- Natural/Semi-natural Green Spaces;
  - Designed Landscapes; and
  - Green Links.
- B.43. The Study also provides a summary of the Borough's wildlife/geological conservation sites including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and non-statutory sites such as Local Sites.

## Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2016 to 2026 (2016)

- B.44. The Solihull Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2016 to 2026<sup>18</sup> intends to provide a review of the Council's first ROWIP (ROWIP 1) and set objectives for the future maintenance and improvement of the local rights of way network. The report identifies The network of rights of way within Solihull is predominately made up of routes located in the two former rural districts of Solihull and Meriden. In total there are currently some 250km of recorded public rights of way in the borough. The majority of these routes are public footpaths which run through rural countryside on natural unsurfaced routes. There is however a small but well used network of public bridleways (paths that cyclists, horse riders and walkers can use) within the Borough, as well as a number of semi-urban and urban paths within villages and on the urban fringe which can play an important role in providing connectivity to local facilities and the adjacent countryside.

## Urban Characterisation Study (2011)

- B.45. The Urban Characterisation Study<sup>19</sup> aim is to aim of this study is to provide an understanding of the physical character of settlements within the Solihull Metropolitan Borough, as defined by the topography, landscape, land use, activity and the arrangement, form and appearance of buildings and spaces. It provides a Provide a broad understanding of the physical characteristics of the main settlements of Solihull at the Borough-wide level.

## HS2 Documents

### HS2 Phase One environmental statement volume 5: landscape and visual assessment (2013)

B.46. An Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared to accompany the deposit of the Hybrid Bill for Phase One of High Speed Two (HS2). Phase One comprises the first section of the proposed HS2 rail network between London and the West Midlands. As part of the ES a Landscape and Visual Assessment<sup>20</sup> (LVIA) has been undertaken of the proposed route of the HS2 line. The section of the line between Burton Green and Castle Bromwich is proposed to pass north south across the Borough. The LVIA is geographically split into Community Framework Areas (CFA). CFAs 18, 19, 23, 24 and 25 are within the Borough and each provides a landscape character assessment of the areas surrounding the proposed HS2 Phase I route. The information is summarised below from south to north. Some of the LCAs are located within multiple CFAs however, they are only summarised once below.

#### CFA 23: Balsall Common and Hampton in Arden

##### *Balsall Common Rural LCA*

B.47. This LCA is described as incorporating the fields surrounding Balsall Common, which are influenced by the settlement. It is a small scale farmed landscape with a varied, undulating topography, characterised by an irregular pattern of fields and narrow winding lanes.

##### *Balsall Common Residential LCA*

B.48. The Balsall Common LCA is described as being a large village characterised by predominantly post-war housing estates with associated facilities such as schools and shops.

##### *Solihull Rural Heartland LCA*

B.49. The Solihull Rural Heartland LCA provides an open rural character that links it with the wider Warwickshire countryside. It provides a rural setting for long established villages within a wooded farmland landscape. The rolling landform is clothed by small fields, winding lanes and isolated, dispersed hamlets.

##### *Blythe Valley LCA*

B.50. An LCA characterised by a tree lined watercourse and open floodplain pasture meadows. Buildings or man-made structures within the LCA are limited and road corridors cut across the landscape.

##### *Blythe Valley Parkland Farmland LCA*

B.51. An LCA characterised by the meandering River Blythe, which traverses the broad gently sloping valley. A mix of agriculture, mainly pastoral fields and former landed estates and deer parks dominate this sparsely settled landscape.

##### *Hampton-in-Arden LCA*

B.52. The LCA is described as being a medium scale village of largely post mid -19th century brick buildings of character which is centred on a medieval church. The key characteristics of the Hampton-in-Arden village landscape include a village centre comprising a church, pub and village shops largely unspoilt by modern development with close access to a network of footpaths.

#### CFA 24: Birmingham Interchange and Chelmsley Wood

##### *M42 Corridor LCA*

B.53. This LCA includes the M42 and associated infrastructure, traffic noise and movement dominate this LCA. The linear LCA extends a variable distance either side of the M42 and encompasses an enclosed, gently rolling landscape defined by woodland edges, parkland and belts of trees.

##### *Birmingham Airport and NEC LCA*

B.54. The NEC occupies a 245ha site, comprising approximately 19ha of covered exhibition space, around 67ha of hard standing and 30ha of woodland to include Birmingham Airport and hotel accommodation, extensive access roads, car parking and associated planting areas. The LCA notes that at night, the area is brightly lit by highway lighting and light spill from surrounding buildings and road junctions.

##### *Birmingham Business Park LCA*

B.55. The LCA comprises the Birmingham Business Park that was completed in the 1980s. It has approximately 100 occupiers within a designed, maturing landscape of broad tree and shrub lined access roads, screened parking areas and

typically two to four storey modern office developments within an overall site area of approximately 45ha.

#### *Chelmsley Wood LCA*

- B.56. Chelmsley Wood LCA is a residential area of predominantly 1960s and 1970s planned, large-scale, medium density, estates of mostly low rise semi-detached housing. It is described as having characteristics including planned open space, shopping and active recreational areas contained by the M6/M6 toll and M42,

#### *Cole Valley LCA*

- B.57. The LCA is characterised by contrasting land uses of agriculture, residences and industry across former parkland.

### **CFA 19: Coleshill Junction**

#### *Outer Birmingham East Residential LCA*

- B.58. This LCA includes Kingshurst, Smith's Wood and Fordbridge. These are characterised by mainly 1960 – 1970 high density residential estates, with supporting facilities such as schools and shops.

### **CFA 25: Castle Bromwich and Bromford**

#### *Park Land Residential LCA*

- B.59. Park Land Residential LCA is an area of post 1980s housing development located 100m south of the M6 corridor, with pockets of open space and an enclosed playing fields and playground at Arden Hall.

#### *Castle Bromwich and Hodge Hill Residential LCA*

- B.60. The LCA comprises a large area of inter-war and post-war housing and open space located to the south of the M6 corridor. Two storey, red brick semi-detached houses with tiled roofs and relatively large gardens predominate.

#### *Tame Valley Flood Plain LCA*

- B.61. This large area of Green Belt is set within a wide valley containing the M6 and A452, the Birmingham and Derby railway line and the meandering River Tame.

#### *Bromford Residential and Bridge North Park LCA*

- B.62. Bromford Residential and Bridge North Park LCA is a linear area of 1980s housing

development with ancillary facilities, such as a school, a precinct, a community centre and small to medium size public open spaces, located south of the M6 corridor.

#### *Park Hall Academy and open Space LCA*

- B.63. A large area of public open space and school playing fields to the south of the M6 and A452 corridors dominates this area.

## **Character Evaluation**

- B.64. Recommendations as to the scale of work required in updating key pieces of background evidence as presented within the analysis Table B.1 . This work includes an evaluation of the usefulness/ appropriateness of the Council's existing evidence base relating to character plan making and in decision making for the Solihull Local Plan.

**Table B.1: Character Evaluation**

Published Data	Extracts Relevant to the LCA	Evaluation
<p>Policy P10 Natural Environment</p>	<p>The Council will seek to protect, enhance and restore the diverse landscape features of the Borough and to create new woodlands and other characteristic habitats, so as to halt and where possible reverse the degrading of the Arden landscape and promote local distinctiveness.</p> <p>Developers will be expected to incorporate measures to protect, enhance and restore the landscape, unless it is demonstrated that it is not feasible, disproportionate or unnecessary.</p> <p>The Council will seek to conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity and geodiversity, to create new native woodlands and other habitats and to protect, restore and enhance ancient woodland and green infrastructure assets across the Borough.</p> <p>In considering the need for green space improvements associated with new development, developers should have regard for the standards and priorities in the Green Spaces Strategy in relation to accessible natural green space.</p>	<p>Use findings of the LCA to conserve and enhance wildlife resources, to deliver a net gain in biodiversity, landscape character and local distinctiveness in order to mitigate pressures for development and landscape change. Developers will need to demonstrate the accordance with this policy through the use of the LCA and with other relevant guidance and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to health benefits of LCA such as promotion of access to countryside where there is currently a shortage in the footpath and bridleway network and where improvements can enhance accessibility and the economic and social benefits of the area. Encourage in particular, joint working with neighbouring authorities to provide a landscape scale approach.</li> <li>• Carry obligations under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and EC Habitat Regulations. Development should include the establishment of any buffers to protect designated sites, ancient woodland and priority habitats along with improvements to enhance the condition of these sites. Use of the LCA should help guide opportunities for wildlife improvements on these sites;</li> <li>• Take into account where the Hedgerow Regulations may be applied to protect the hedgerow structure across the area and use of the LCA to identify opportunities to restore the hedgerow network;</li> <li>• Encourage development to take reference from the LCA guidelines to identify the potential for landscape improvement and change to meet development needs whilst restoring the divers landscape features of the Borough;</li> <li>• The LCA could be used to consider suitable sites and strategic locations for offsetting within the biodiversity network to address the fragmentation of the Arden biodiversity network;</li> <li>• The Council is a partner in the Kingfisher Country Park Project, with Birmingham and environmental agencies and groups, who have come together to protect and restore the landscape of the River Cole and Kingshurst Brook in North Solihull. The LCA could be used to identify key characteristics of the area and support appropriate restoration. Similarly, the Local Nature Partnership for Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull, the sub-regional Green Infrastructure Initiative and the proposals for Nature Improvement Areas can draw on the LCA as a means of addressing fragmentation across neighbouring character areas;</li> <li>• Users of the natural green space standards set out in the Council’s Green Spaces Strategy, can link these with the relevant LCAs.</li> </ul>

Table B.1: Character Evaluation (contd.)

Published Data	Extracts Relevant to the LCA	Evaluation
<p><b>Policy P11 Water Management</b></p>	<p>All new development shall incorporate sustainable drainage systems, unless it is shown to be impractical to do so. Developers shall ensure that adequate space is made for water within the design layout of all new developments to support the full use of sustainable drainage systems, and shall demonstrate the improvements to the water environment will be maximised through consideration of a range of techniques. Wherever possible, sustainable drainage systems will be expected to contribute towards wider sustainability considerations, including amenity recreation, conservation of biodiversity and landscape character, as well as flood alleviation and water quality control’.</p>	<p>The Environment Agency Humber River Basin Management Plans, Catchment Flood Management Plans and Local Flood Risk Strategy produced by the Lead Local Flood Authority includes the Rivers Blythe and Cole and their tributaries. Developers will need to demonstrate accordance with this policy through the use of the LCA and with other relevant guidance and consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable drainage systems, within the design layout of all new developments and to third party land;</li> <li>• Locations where sustainable drainage systems could contribute to amenity and wider sustainability considerations such as recreation, nature conservation, conservation of biodiversity, landscape character and enhancement of green infrastructure;</li> <li>• Options such as seeking to reinstate the natural floodplain, de-culverting of watercourses or take action to store water.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy P13 Minerals</b></p>	<p>Proposals for mineral working or related infrastructure will be assessed against the following criteria:</p> <p>v. Impact of the proposed activities, including visual impacts:</p> <p>vii. Impact on the environment, landscape, built heritage and archaeology, nature conservation interests;</p> <p>x. Restoration to a safe and high quality condition with appropriate aftercare in accordance with agreed restoration and aftercare schemes and within an agreed period following the cessation of extraction; and</p> <p>xi. Reclamation to an agreed use, which should prioritise the contribution the site could make to green infrastructure, the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, including Local Biodiversity Action Plans, the enhancement and restoration of the Arden landscape, flood risk management, appropriate recreation uses and agriculture, as well as the availability of suitable infill material if appropriate.</p>	<p>The findings of the LCA should be used to conserve and enhance wildlife resources, to deliver a net gain in biodiversity, landscape character and local distinctiveness. In order to provide mitigation, restoration, aftercare and after use to compensate for pressures leading from primary sand and gravel extraction, proposals should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts on the landscape, built heritage and archaeology and nature conservation interests and the use of the LCA to identify appropriate provision of buffer areas between extraction and these environmental assets;</li> <li>• How the LCA can contribute to reclamation measures that take into account contributions to green infrastructure, the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, including Local Biodiversity Action Plans.</li> </ul>

Table B.1: Character Evaluation (contd.)

Published Data	Extracts Relevant to the LCA	Evaluation
<p><b>Policy P14 Amenity</b></p>	<p>The Council will seek to protect and enhance the amenity of existing and potential occupiers of houses, businesses and other uses in considering proposals for new development, and will:</p> <p>ii. Consider the visual and other amenities of potential occupiers and users of new developments close to overhead power lines and substations. Developers will be expected to locate and design new developments so as to minimise the visual and other amenity impacts; and</p> <p>iv. Safeguard important trees, hedgerows and woodlands, encourage new and replacement tree and hedgerow planting and identify areas that may be suitable for the creation of new woodlands. Priority will be given to locations that enhance or restore the green infrastructure network and to the planting of species characteristic of the Arden Warwickshire landscape.</p>	<p>Use findings of the LCA to compensate for pressures leading from development and landscape change and to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify important trees, hedgerows and woodlands and areas that may be suitable for the creation of new woodlands, or areas where new planting may be at odds with the open landscape character of the area;</li> <li>• Define sensitive areas where the impact of noise would cause intrusion on the landscape character, biodiversity and local distinctiveness of the area;</li> <li>• Parts of the Borough where dark skies need to remain protected from the impacts of light pollution and development outside existing settlement where significant lighting already exists;</li> <li>• Areas of suburbanisation, which are becoming a threat to the character and quality of the landscape;</li> <li>• Areas where masts and electronic communications networks and infrastructure cause harm to the character of the area; and</li> <li>• The tranquil parts of the Borough, such as those not subject to the interface from key transport corridors and areas where quiet lanes remain;</li> <li>• Canal cuttings, footpaths, some conservation areas, villages and hamlets away from major roads and hamlets;</li> <li>• Sources of significant noise such as Birmingham Airport, major roads and railways, mineral workings and industrial processes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy P15 Securing Design Quality</b></p>	<p>All development proposals will be expected to achieve good quality, inclusive and sustainable design, which meets the following key principles:</p> <p>i. Conserves and enhances local character, distinctiveness and streetscape quality and ensures that the scale, massing, density, layout, materials and landscape of the development respect the surrounding natural, built and historic environment.</p>	<p>Use findings of the LCA to compensate for pressures leading from development and landscape change and to ensure they incorporate good quality, inclusive and sustainable design and to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate areas which possess a particularly distinctive ‘sense of place’;</li> <li>• Identify qualities of key economic assets within the M42 Economic Gateway including the Blythe Valley Park; and</li> <li>• Follow the masterplan proposals for High Speed 2 (HS2) and the associated station and linear infrastructure.</li> </ul>

Table B.1: Character Evaluation (contd.)

Published Data	Extracts Relevant to the LCA	Evaluation
<p>Policy P16 Conservation of Heritage Assets and Local Distinctiveness</p>	<p>Development will be expected to preserve or enhance heritage assets as appropriate to their significance, conserve local character and distinctiveness and create or sustain a sense of place.</p>	<p>Use findings of the LCA to recognise the important heritage assets and the historic environment and their distinctive setting, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The historical development and setting of the established rural settlements of Meriden, Hampton-in-Arden, Balsall Common, Knowle, Dorridge, Bentley Heath, Hockley Heath, Cheswick Green and Tidbury Green;</li> <li>• The distinct medieval core of historic hamlets including Berkswell, Barston, Temple Balsall, Meriden Hill, Walsal End, Hampton-in-Arden, Bickenhall and Knowle;</li> <li>• Distinctive fieldscapes, parks and gardens as defined in the Warwickshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project, Warwickshire Historic Farmstead Characterisation Project, Solihull Historic Environment Record, Solihull's at Risk registers, Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans and Heritage Assessment of Sites Proposed for Inclusion as Core Strategy Sites and the further 2012 report providing more detailed assessment work; and</li> <li>• The canal and railway network, including disused railway lines together with associated buildings and structures.</li> <li>• Landscape heritage assets are just as important as the man-made and built heritage features of the Borough, particularly where they contribute to the setting of Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments and Conservation Areas. Parts of the landscape close to communities can also provide landscape significance through their recreational value, unspoilt character, tranquillity, openness or richness and quality of features such as hedge-banks with bracken, roadside oaks, copses and small areas of woodland.</li> </ul>

Table B.1: Character Evaluation (contd.)

Published Data	Extracts Relevant to the LCA	Evaluation
<p><b>Policy P17 Countryside and Green Belt</b></p>	<p>The Council will not permit inappropriate development in the Green Belt, except in very special circumstances.</p> <p>The small settlements of Hampton-in-Arden, Hockley Heath, Meriden and Catherine de Barnes are not in the Green Belt and are not therefore subject to Green Belt policy. Nevertheless, the Council, in considering applications for development in these settlements, will take into account the importance of their rural setting and of their attributes, such as historic buildings, open space, density of development, landscape and townscape that contribute towards their special character. Immediately beyond the inset boundary, strict Green Belt policies will apply.</p>	<p>Use findings of the LCA to recognise the broad qualities and purposes of the land that lies within the Green Belt designation and to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conserve the character of the settlement and urban areas and the key gaps between;</li> <li>• Conserve the openness of the area in relation to surrounding development and the settlement edge;</li> <li>• Conserve the ancient woodlands, veteran trees, historic field patterns including mature hedgerows;</li> <li>• Conserve the rural setting of settlements and their attributes such as historic buildings, open space, density of development and landscape and townscape features that contribute to their special character;</li> <li>• Integrate the extension of the runway at Birmingham Airport and the re-alignment of the A45 Coventry Road into the local landscape;</li> <li>• Guide use of the land at Tidbury Green due to be returned to Green Belt;</li> <li>• Guide developments within the Green Belt such as Jaguar Land Rover and Whale Tankers;</li> <li>• Conserve the character of the villages subject to limited infilling at Chadwick End, Cheswick Green and Tidbury Green; and</li> <li>• Conserve the special rural character of the settlements of Catherine de Barnes, Hampton in Arden, Hockley Heath and Meriden.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy P18 Health and Well Being</b></p>	<p>The Council will expect new development proposals to promote, support and enhance physical and mental health and well-being. Support will be given to proposals which:</p> <p>ii. Contribute to a high quality, attractive and safe public realm in accordance with Policy P15 Securing Design Quality, to encourage social interaction and facilitate movement on foot and by cycle;</p> <p>iv. Improve the quality and quantity of the green infrastructure network in the Borough, particularly in the North Solihull Regeneration Area and in areas where green infrastructure is identified as lacking. The protection and enhancement of physical access, including public rights of way to open space and green infrastructure will also be supported.</p>	<p>Use findings of the LCA to identify the potential for achieving positive health outcomes when considering all development proposals, in particular to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Areas that provide significant opportunities for formal and informal physical activity, exercise opportunities, recreation and play and where a shortfall in opportunities exist;</li> <li>• Areas that contribute to a high quality, safe and convenient walking and cycling network; and areas where people can walk and cycle for both pleasure and purpose;</li> <li>• Areas where green infrastructure is lacking;</li> <li>• Areas where transport infrastructure leads to community and settlement severance;</li> <li>• The five principles set out in the Landscape Institute Position Statement for Public Health and Landscape where appropriate.</li> </ul>

Table B.1: Character Evaluation (contd.)

Published Data	Extracts Relevant to the LCA	Evaluation
<p>Policy P20 Provision for Open Space, Children's Play, Sport, Recreation and Leisure</p>	<p>The Council recognises the importance and multi-functional benefits of public open space, sports and recreational facilities within the Borough and will support the enhancement of existing facilities and open space. Loss of existing facilities through development will not be permitted where they are of value by to the local community for recreation, visual amenity, nature conservation or make an important contribution to the quality of the environment or network of green infrastructure, unless:</p> <p>i. it can be demonstrated that the open space or buildings are clearly surplus to requirements; or</p> <p>ii. the need or benefits of the development clearly outweigh the loss.</p> <p>The Council supports the principle of designating land as Local Green Space. Where designation would be appropriate, necessary and where the open space meets the criteria outlined in national guidance, the Council will support designation of Local Green Spaces in neighbourhood plans.</p> <p>The Council will require provision for and maintenance of appropriate open space, sports and recreational facilities as an integral part of new development.</p>	<p>Use findings of the LCA to identify existing open space, children play, sport, recreation and leisure facilities including the river and canal network, in particular to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priorities outlined in the Green Spaces Strategy (2006) and British Waterways' Guidance: Waterways for Tomorrow (2000) and the Policy Review of the Waterways (2005);</li> <li>• Opportunities to increase provision of offline moorings, such as marinas and residential moorings and associated open space and accessible areas.</li> <li>• Priorities outlined in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2016 to 2026 (2016)</li> </ul>

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# Appendix C: Stakeholder Workshop Consultations

C.1. The preparation of the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) has been a collaborative process between Waterman, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) and other selected stakeholders to ensure that the process has been transparent, well-targeted and coherent. Stakeholder input has been essential in support of the LCA process and consultation was undertaken in various forms to collect opinion and views, to gather additional knowledge and gaps in baseline. The process of consultation undertaken has remained proportionate to the expected scope of the project drawing on expertise from organisations and target groups operating within the Borough with local knowledge of the area.

## Workshops

C.2. Consultation in the form of Workshops took place and details are set out in Table C.1.

**Table C.1: Overview of the Workshops**

Consultation	Attendees	Key Outputs
<p><b>Workshop 1:</b> 26th July 2016 Council House, Manor Square, Solihull, B91 3QB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waterman</li> <li>Key SMBC internal stakeholders</li> </ul>	To develop and agree the methodology and baseline data.
<p><b>Workshop 2:</b> 4th August 2016 Council House, Manor Square, Solihull, B91 3QB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waterman</li> <li>Key SMBC internal stakeholders</li> </ul>	To develop and agree the methodology, the baseline data. To agree the reporting formats and the assumed implications on plan making and decision taking. To draw up an agreed stakeholder consultation process to capture the knowledge and perceptions of a range of local and specialist groups.
<p><b>Workshop 3:</b> 9th September 2016 Civic Suite, Council House, Homer Road, Solihull, B91 3QZ</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waterman</li> <li>SMBC internal stakeholders</li> <li>Various external partners</li> </ul>	To make progress on the LCA study and review work as part of the assessment process. To help guide/inform the study, and review the work carried out to date.

### Workshop 3:

C.3. The Workshop session was a key step in this process to obtain feedback from interested parties on issues in support of the preparation of the LCA. The Workshop was structured to enable discussions directly with interested parties to make sure their views were fully understood. The proceedings were also arranged to allow for an exchange in views between different stakeholder groups and to facilitate consensus on the progress of the LCA work to date. The Workshop also sought to gather views on areas of deliberation or misunderstanding to ensure all relevant issues and opinions could be taken into account.

C.4. The following broad topics were covered during Workshop 3:

- When landscape character assessment is used and for what purpose;
- Strengths and weaknesses of landscape character assessment in decision making as part of the Local Plan process;
- Design and navigability of a landscape character assessment document;
- Broad character mapping of landscape characteristics for the Borough of Solihull; and
- Sensitivities and development pressures affecting the landscape character within the Borough of Solihull.

C.5. Invitations to the Workshop 3 were issued to key partners from Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Warwickshire County Council, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, representatives from local parish councils, National Farmers Union, Natural England, Environmental Agency and the Canals and Rivers Trust.

C.6. The Workshop was attended by the following partners:

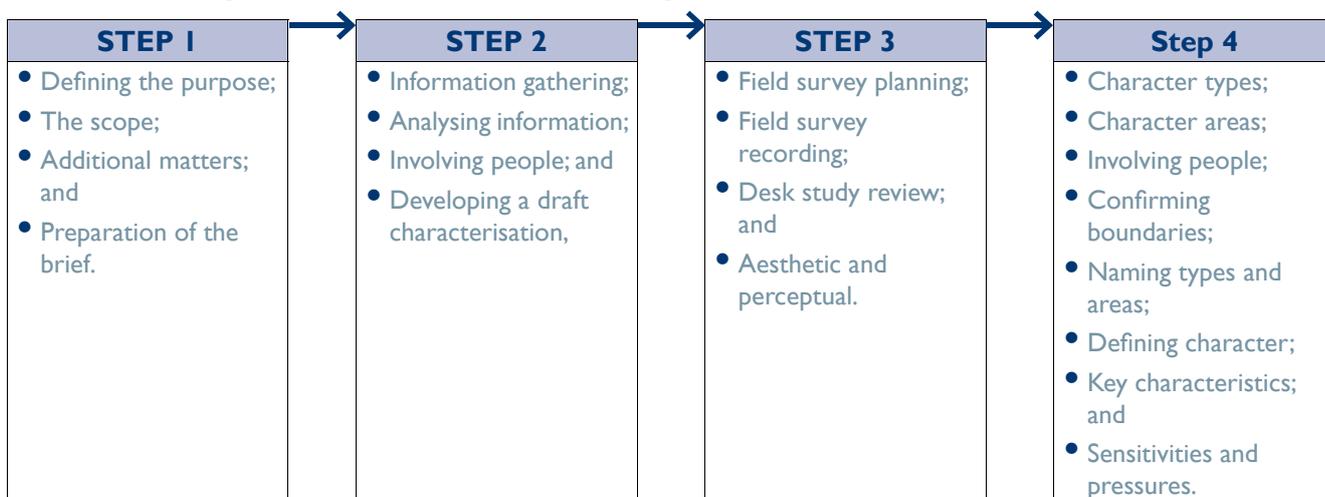
Name	Organisation
Wendy Wright	Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Ltd.
Dikshita Dutt	Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Ltd.
Sheila Cooper	Balsall Parish Council
Richard Lloyd	Balsall Parish Council and Berkswell Parish Councils
Andrew Burrow	Berkswell Parish Council
Brian Brown	Cheswick Green Parish Council
Jean Walters	Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
Sylvia Martin	Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
Jenni Blakeman	SMBC
Michael Eastwood	SMBC
Gary Palmer	SMBC
Ben Wallace	Warwickshire County Council
Gina Rowe	Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

C.7. The workshop commenced with a presentation by Gary Palmer (SMBC) who provided the Local Plan and planning policy context. Waterman then presented the background to the study giving information about the itinerary for the Workshop and the key points raised during the workshop are summarised below:

- Project Brief
- Landscape Character Assessment Process
- Landscape Character Baseline
- Local Landscape Character Review

*Project Brief and Character Assessment Process*

C.8. Waterman presented the outline of the SMBC Project Brief and the approach to the assessment process based on the Natural England Guide, which identifies four stages:



### *Character Assessment Baseline*

- C.9. Additional guidance and supporting documents currently absent from the baseline data in the assessment process were discussed. It was agreed that the relevant documents would be incorporated into Appendix B (Landscape Character Baseline) to allow a more robust and detailed approach to the landscape character baseline part of the process.
- C.10. It was also agreed that additional information relating to locally important buildings, an urban characterisation study, the specific geology of the Borough, information relating to Blythe Valley Eco System Services and biodiversity offsetting would also be taken into account by Waterman during the LCA process. The importance of incorporating HS2 influences was also highlighted as an important point for consideration.

### *Local Character Review*

- C.11. During this final stage of the Workshop, the key partners were divided into working groups to assess a series of Local Landscape Character Areas. This part of the Workshop was guided by a questionnaire (See Fig C.1) provided by Waterman, which provided key questions to help inform the provision of additional information.
- C.12. This session provided an opportunity for stakeholder to provide comments on the baseline of the local character areas, the sensitivity of these areas and the guidelines that should be applied to protect and enhance the Landscape. No objection to the layout and presentation of information of the draft Landscape Character Area Sheets were raised. All the feedback provided by the stakeholders during this session was reviewed and included within the final Landscape Character Area Sheets where appropriate.
- C.13. Following the workshop consultation, communications continued throughout the assessment process to assist and guide the production of the Landscape Character Assessment.

Figure C.1: Example of the questionnaire provided at Workshop 3.

 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2016

**Solihull Metropolitan Borough Landscape Character Assessment Workshop Questionnaire:**

LCA \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you agree with the characteristics of the area? Are there any other characteristics that should be included?
2. Do you agree with the description of the area? Please add any other description that should be included/removed/and amended.
3. Do you agree with the boundary of the area? Is there any part where you believe the area does not belong to this LCA?
4. Is there any area within this LCA that is particularly distinct drawing upon your local knowledge?
5. Are there any specific studies or local information that should be consulted to assist with assessment of this LCA?

**Solihull Metropolitan Borough Landscape Character Assessment Workshop Questionnaire (Cont.):**

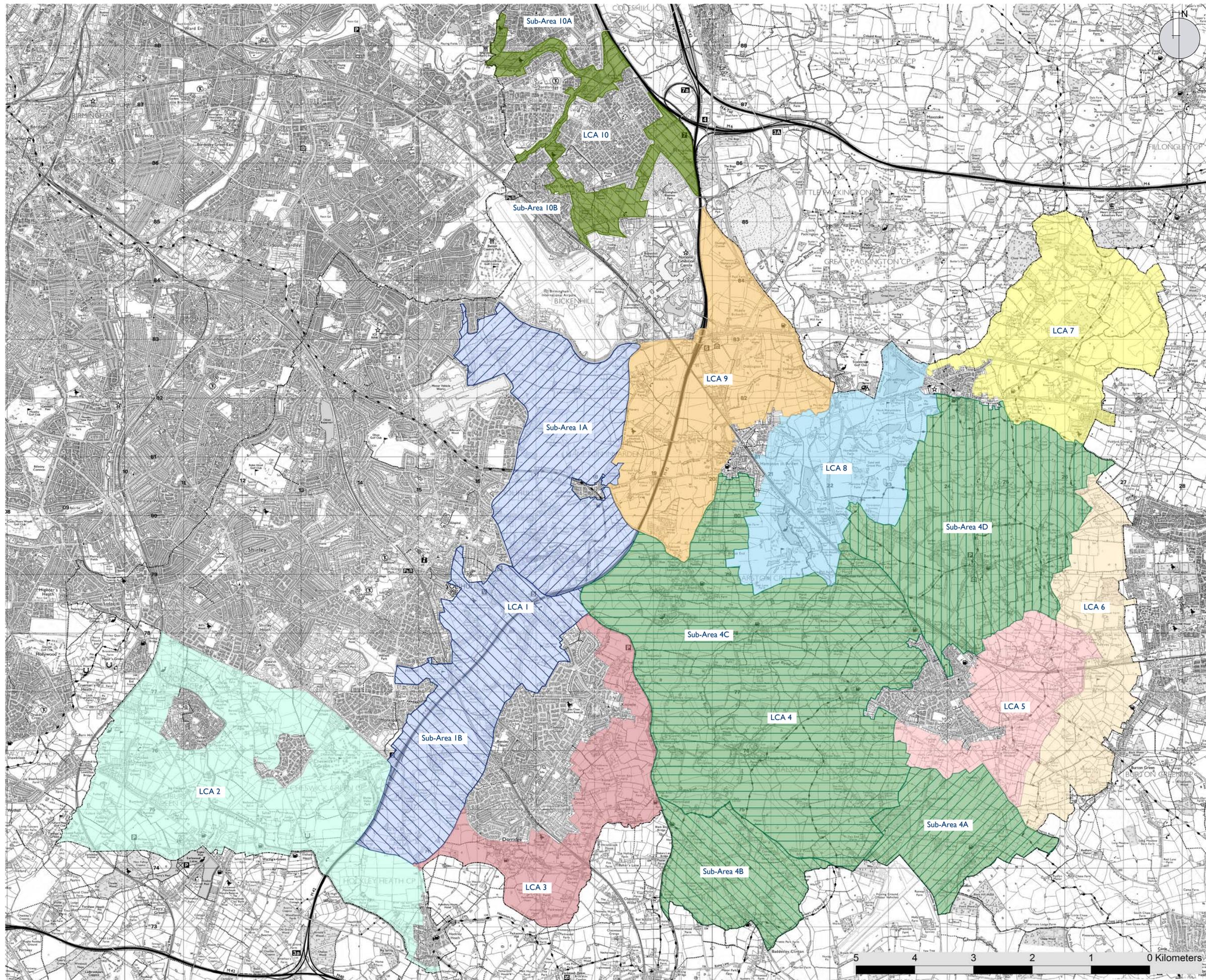
6. Do you know of current development pressure and the type of development within this LCA?

7. Does this LCA as a whole or any parts within it require specific management method?

8. Any other comments?

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# Appendix E: Bibliography

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# Appendix F: Glossary

Terms	Definitions
Above Ordnance Datum (AOD)	A spot height relative to the average sea level.
Arden	A National Character Area comprising farmland and former wood-pasture lying to the south and east of Birmingham, including part of the West Midlands conurbation.
Borough	The Metropolitan Borough of Solihull.
Broad Character Area	Area defined by the National Character Area (NCA) profile.
Characterisation	The process of identifying areas of similar character, classifying and mapping them and describing their character.
Characteristics	Elements, or combinations of elements, which make a particular contribution to distinctive character.
Classification	Is concerned with dividing the landscape into areas of distinct, recognisable and consistent common character and grouping areas of similar character together.
Elements	Individual components which make up the landscape, such as trees and hedges.
Features	Particularly prominent or eye catching elements, like tree clumps, church towers, or wooded skylines.
Intermediate Character Areas	Defined areas classified to update and refine the assessment of character areas identified in the Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines (Arden)
Key Characteristics	Those combinations of elements which are particularly important to the current character of the landscape and help to give an area its particularly distinctive sense of place.
Landscape Capacity	The degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without unacceptable adverse effects on its character. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of the change being proposed.
Landscape Character	A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.
Landscape Character Areas	These are single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type. Each has its own individual character and identity, even though it shares the same generic characteristics with other types.
Landscape Character Assessment	This is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive. This process results in the production of a Landscape Character Assessment.
Landscape Character Types	These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historical land use, and settlement pattern.

Terms	Definitions
Landscape Designations	Statutory and non-statutory national landscape and local planning policy designations relating to landscape.
Landscape Quality	is based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape, and about its intactness, from visual, functional, and ecological perspectives. It also reflects the state of repair of individual features and elements which make up the character in any one place.
Landscape Sensitivity	The extent to which a landscape can accept change of a particular type and scale without unacceptable adverse effects on its character.
Landscape Value	The relative value or importance attached to a landscape (often as a basis for designation or recognition), which expresses national or local consensus, because of its quality, special qualities including perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness, cultural associations or other conservation issues.
Land Use Pattern	The amalgamation to of multiple land uses with the landscape such as settlements and semi-natural habitats such as arable fields, pastures, and managed woods.
Local Character Areas	Areas identified to provide greater understanding of distributed landscapes, townscapes, urban fringe, villages and land management areas.
National Character Area	Areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.
Visual Sensitivity	The overall visibility of each landscape character sub area, visual enclosure, openness of the area, distribution and number of visual receptors and the importance and prominence of any skyline that may be visible in the area.

# Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment

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