



OAK GREEN

Land at Knowle Farm, Dorridge

Vision Highlights

February 2020



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1. Introduction.....	2
2. Green Belt Proposals.....	6
3. Summary of Ecological Assessment.....	12
4. Concept Plan.....	14
5. Key Benefits.....	18

1. INTRODUCTION

This Vision Highlights Document has been produced on behalf of Heyford Developments Ltd to support the promotion of land at Knowle Farm, Dorridge through the Solihull Draft Local Plan.

It is prepared in response to the Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) January 2019 Supplementary Consultation and in particular, the Amber sites document, which identified a number of sites which were not included as draft allocations but were acknowledged as performing better than other submitted sites. The land at Knowle Farm is identified as an amber site (referenced as Land off Blue Lake Road ref A5). As this Vision Highlights Document sets out, the site should be categorised as a green site and identified as a draft allocation.

This document summarises the Vision Document produced and submitted to SMBC in December 2018, and aims to re-affirm the key benefits of the scheme and area proposed for residential development; this is a significantly decreased area from the boundary presented in the Amber Sites Consultation document, as shown on the plan overleaf.

The document has also sought to explain the rationale for establishing a resilient Green Belt boundary along Norton Green Lane, that would be required in the event of allocation of the land for housing and the removal of the site from the Green Belt.

Importantly, the proposals include an area of land that would be utilised to create a new Country Park and which would be offered alongside the proposed development and improvements to accessibility to mitigate the loss of land from the Green Belt.



Site Boundary plan

Planning Context

- » Solihull have identified a minimum housing need of 13,039 new dwellings between 2019 and 2035 based on the standard method.
- » There is an identified unmet housing need in the wider HMA which Solihull need to assist with.
- » The Council have identified exceptional circumstances to release land from the Green Belt (paragraph 137).
- » The site is in a sustainable location to meet both Solihull's and the wider unmet needs. As identified in the Council's assessment, the site performs well against suitability and availability criteria.
- » The site performs poorly against the purposes of the Green Belt and can provide a new defined Green Belt boundary using readily recognisable and defensible boundaries (paragraph 139). It also will deliver significant compensatory requirements to offset the loss of the Green Belt (paragraph 138).

Site Assessment

A number of detailed technical assessments and surveys have been undertaken to inform the masterplan in relation to the following disciplines:

- » Access and Movement
- » Flood Risk and Drainage
- » Landscape (including visual impact, landform and landscape character)
- » Ecology
- » Arboriculture

The Vision Document (December 2018) presents a summary of these technical assessments and explains how their outcomes have shaped the concept masterplan.

Importantly, the Vision Document and supporting technical assessments have demonstrated that there are no “showstoppers” that would prevent the land at Knowle Farm being brought forward for development subject to strategic allocation through the Local Plan.

2. GREEN BELT PROPOSALS

The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy stated in NPPF 2019 at paragraph 133 is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.

The Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment Report (Atkins, July 2016) considered the whole of the Borough. The study was undertaken with a ‘policy-off’ basis. The core purpose of the Green Belt Assessment with regards to the Green Belt in Dorridge is:

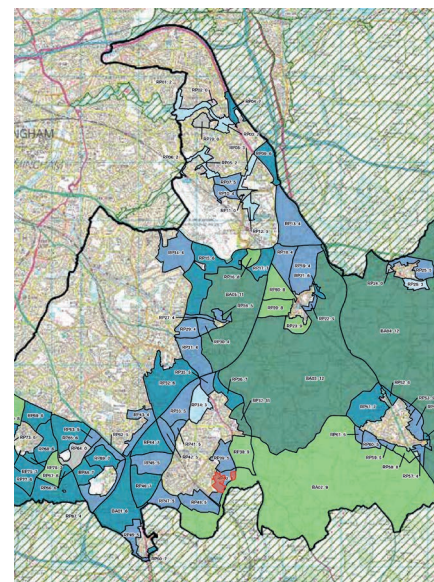
*“To assess the extent to which the land currently designated as Green Belt within SMBC fulfils the essential characteristics and purposes of Green Belt land as set out in Paragraphs 79 and 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).” *1*

Approximately 12,000 hectares of SMBC is designated as Green Belt land, which accounts for nearly two thirds of its area. The Green Belt within SMBC contributes to the West Midlands Green Belt that surrounds the Birmingham conurbation.

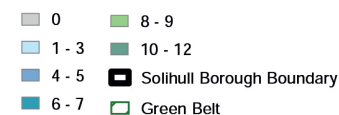
The Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment Report has identified Refined Parcels as areas of land that adjoin or sit adjacent to built-up areas, including inset villages, such as Dorridge. The site is within Refined Parcel RP. 40 which has a low total score of 4 out of a possible total of 12.

The 2016 Assessment states that Refined Parcels which perform highly against purpose 1: to ‘Check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas’ are those parcels which adjoin strong defensible permanent boundaries. The site in RP40 scores just 1 point indicating a lower performing parcel and clearly does not make a major contribution to this Green Belt Purpose. It states that Refined Parcels which are lower performing against purpose 1 include parcels which are to the east of and immediately adjacent to the built up areas of Solihull.

Refined Parcels which perform Moderately against purpose 3 to ‘Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment’ are generally those Parcels which immediately adjoin the built up areas of Solihull, Dorridge, Knowle and Coventry. Although adjacent to urban areas, these parcels are mainly characterised by countryside and do not contain development. The site in RP.40 is given its highest score of 2, more moderately performing parcel due to the absence of development, but development surrounds the site and the parcel and this exerts a strong influence.



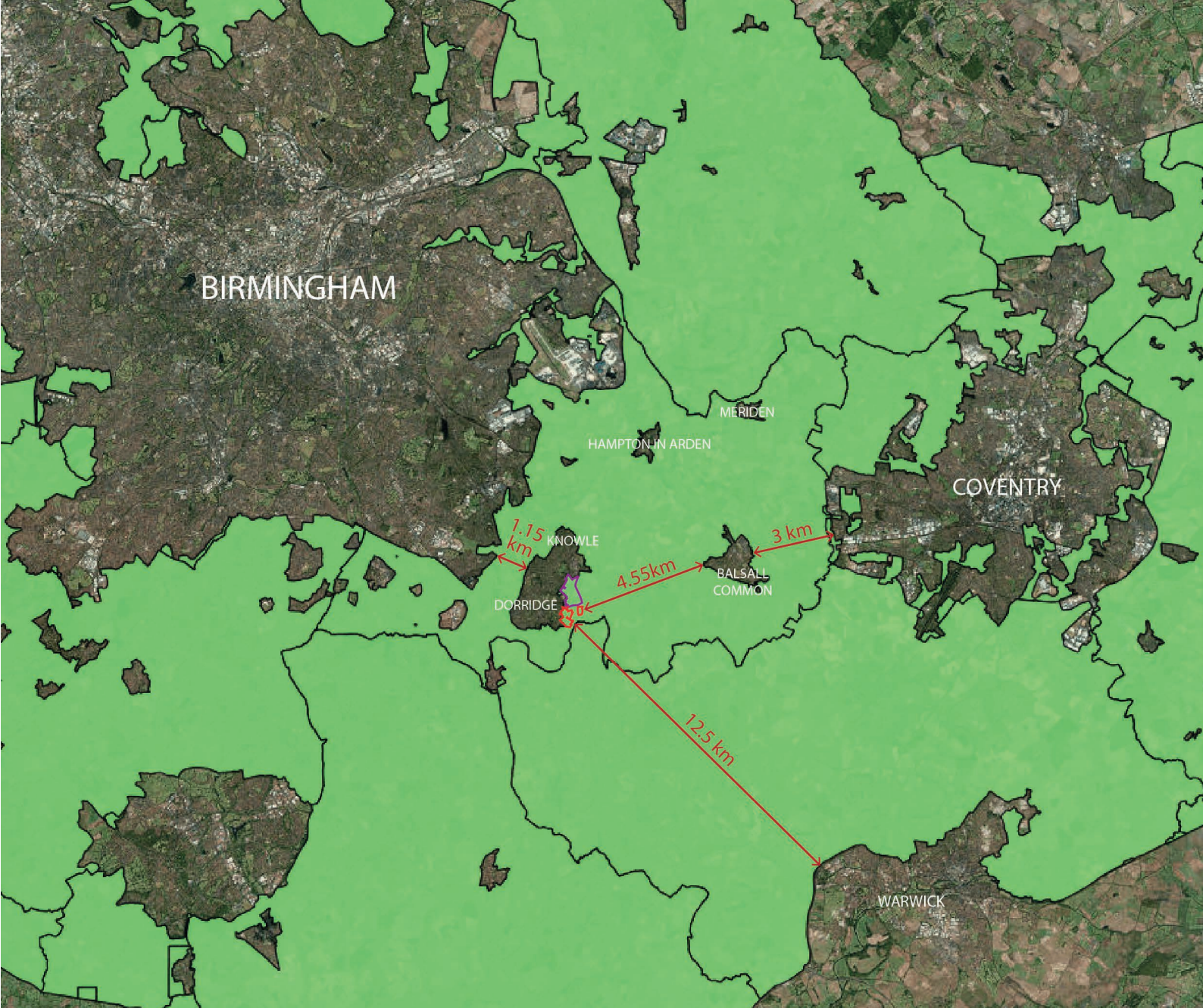
Solihull Green Belt Plan (extract from Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment, July 2016)



Purpose of Green Belt	RP40
To prevent Urban Sprawl	1
To prevent neighbouring towns merging	1
Safeguarding the countryside	2
Preserve the setting of historic towns	0
Total	4

Solihull Green Belt Parcel RP40 scores

*1 The National Planning Policy Framework was first published on 27 March 2012 and updated on 24 July 2018 and subsequently again on 19 February 2019.



Green Belt Plan












- Site Boundary
- Site 9 Arden Triangle
(Solihull Local Plan Review)
- Green Belt
- Distances between settlements

Purpose 1 NPPF: (a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

The opportunity exists to release land at Knowle Farm to deliver additional housing. As acknowledged in the Council's Green Belt Assessment, the land within Parcel RP40 is lower performing and release of the site would enable:

- » Creation of a new and resilient Green Belt boundary along Norton Green Lane
- » Alignment of a new boundary with the Arden Triangle site and rounding off of the settlement edge on east side of Dorridge
- » Not all the land within the new Green Belt is proposed for development.

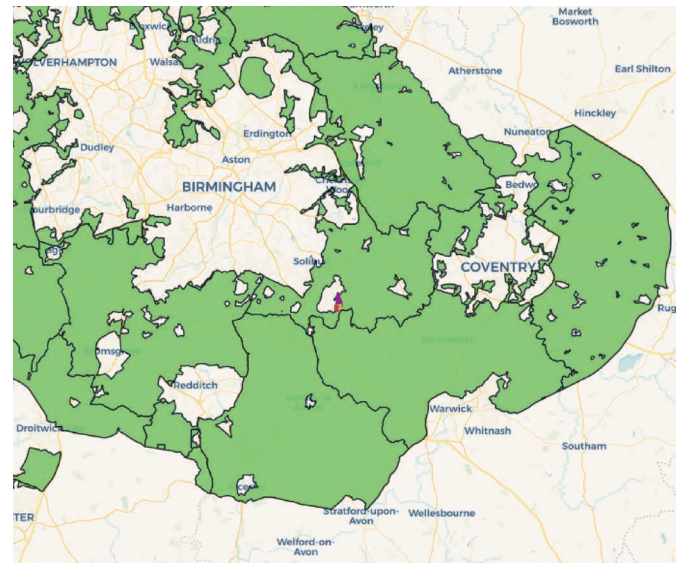


- | | |
|--|--|
|  Site Boundary |  Hedgerows - Physical Feature |
|  Site 9 Arden Triangle (Solihull Local Plan Review) |  Hedgerows Trees - Physical Feature |
|  Existing Green Belt Boundary |  Scattered Rural Properties/Buildings |
|  Proposed Country Park |  Settlement Limit |
|  Barriers to Unrestricted Sprawl |  Proposed Green Belt |
|  Norton Green Lane - Clear Boundary | |

Purpose 2 NPPF: (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

Creation of a new Green Belt boundary along Norton Green Lane and release of land for housing in this location would:

- » Prevent further encroachment and subsequent merging of settlements
- » Maintain clear separation from Balsall Common as the nearest settlement in this non-strategic gap
- » The Green Belt is approximately 4.55km deep between Dorridge and Balsall Common



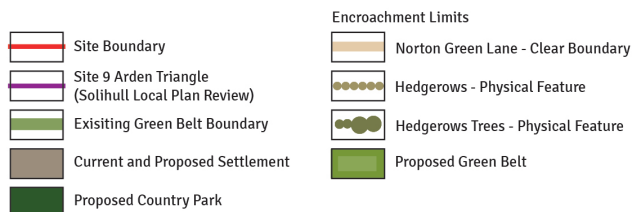
- | |
|--|
|  Site Boundary |
|  Site 9 Arden Triangle (Solihull Local Plan Review) |
|  Green Belt |



Purpose 3 NPPF (c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

Release of land at Knowle Farm and creation of a new Green Belt boundary would ensure:

- » The new Green Belt would be better related to landform
- » The site sits at the settlement edge and relates clearly and closely to the settlement
- » Not all the land within the new Green Belt is proposed for development



Proposed Green Belt Change

The new and proposed Green Belt boundary would follow existing features and have the following advantages:

- » Clear and well defined existing components in the landscape
- » Green Belt boundary would follow existing physical features including: existing highway - Norton Green Lane; existing hedgerows along Norton Green Lane; existing low lying landform; existing scattered ribbon development along Norton Green Lane; and the proposed draft allocation at Arden Triangle along Grove Road
- » Readily recognisable features
- » Existing boundary components in the landscape that are durable and are likely to be permanent



Landscape Character

National Character Area (NCA) 91: Arden

At a National level the Site is located within National Character Area (NCA) 91: Arden. Key Characteristics of the NCA which are found within the Site include the many mature Oaks that are present and well established within many hedgerows. Large and prominent Oak trees are also present as free standing trees within the Site. These individual specimens are mature and have a good shape and are a character influencing element in the local landscape.

Landscape Character Assessment (Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council)

The Landscape Character Assessment for Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council places the Site into Landscape Character Area (LCA) 3, Knowle and Dorridge Fringe.

Key characteristics of the LCA relevant to the Site and its setting include:

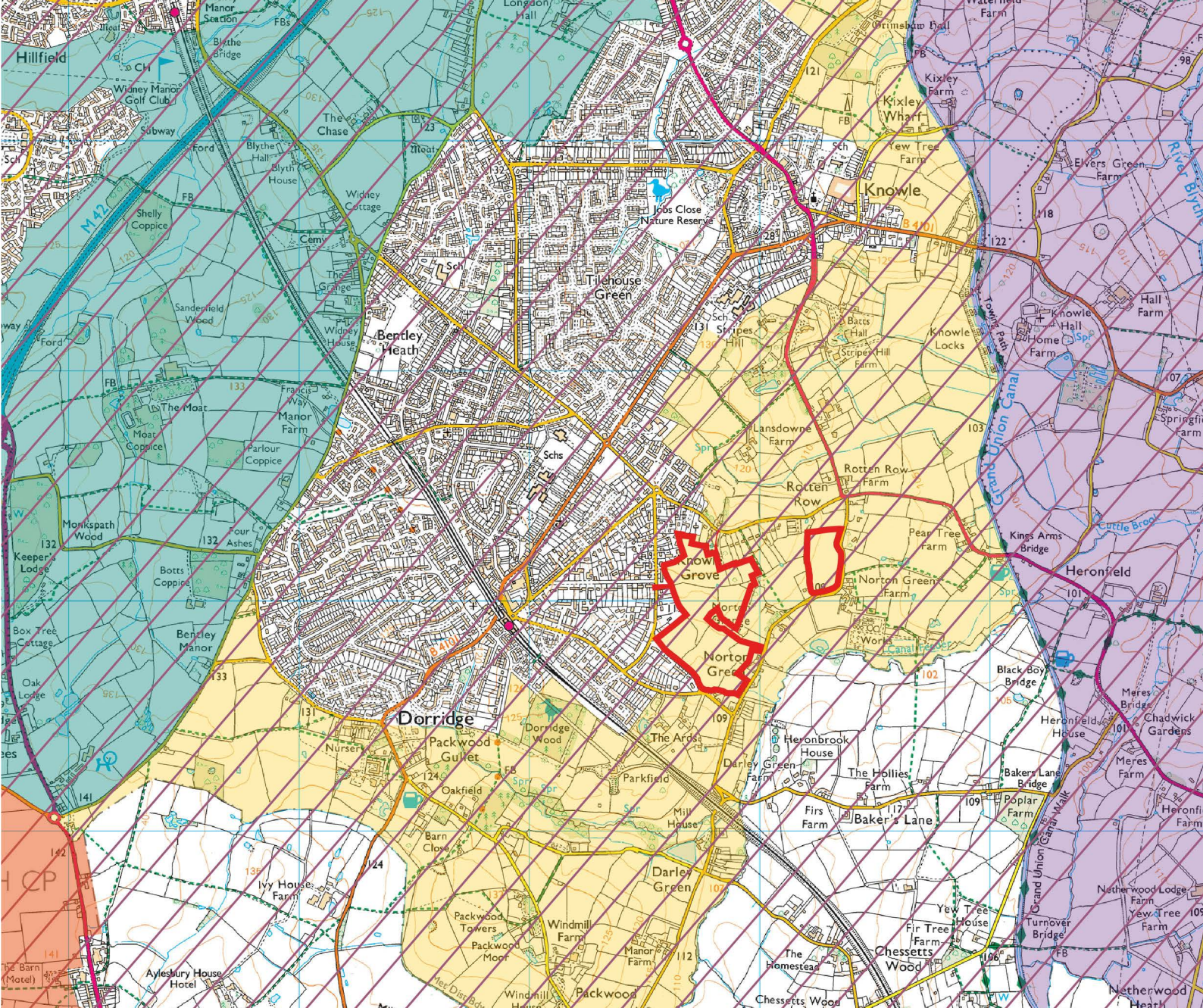
- » Land use is varied with some residential development, individual farmsteads, horsiculture, parkland and agricultural land...

- » Urban influences are evident with managed green spaces, telegraph poles and manicured hedgerows...
- » Pockets of woodland are scattered across the area.
- » Mature hedgerow trees are a key feature within the area, although some have become tall and leggy through lack of management... ash and oak are the dominant species.
- » ... Cuttle Brook, Canal Feeder and their associated springs form the main drainage pattern within the LCA, and
- » Large individual residential properties with associated gardens/ garden style ornamental planting are also present.

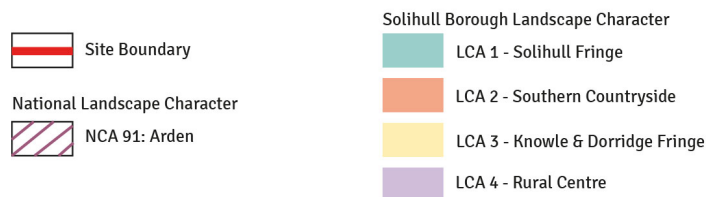
To a degree, the Site is representative of some of the attributes of the local landscape character insofar that it is located on gently undulating land, and that like many areas, contains a large number of mature hedgerow tree (predominately Oaks). The quantity, size, prominence, contribute to the wooded appearance of the immediate setting. and the tree cover, in unison with the rolling landform, contain the influences of settlement. .

The Council set out Guidelines for the LCA and they have some relevance to the development proposal and include:

- » Encourage appropriate management to retain strong hedgerow structure and the planting of individual trees along field boundaries, 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...
- » 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, and
- » 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.



Landscape Character Areas Plan



3. SUMMARY OF ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Designated sites

There are no designated sites of nature conservation importance within the proposed development site boundary or the area identified for the Country Park. The closest site to the proposed development site is 'Blythe Source Dorridge' Local Wildlife Site (LWS), which lies approximately 200m north of the site and is designated for spring and ditch habitat. The closest site to the proposed Country Park is 'Rotten Row Field' LWS, which lies immediately adjacent to the northern boundary and is designated for unimproved grassland.

The nearest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to the proposed site and Country Park is 'Brook Meadow, Darley Green' SSSI which lies approximately 250m to the southeast and is designated for herb-rich flood meadow grassland. No internationally-designated sites of nature conservation importance occur within 10km of the site boundary.

Habitats

The proposed development site comprises predominantly poor semi-improved grassland fields, bounded by species-rich hedgerows, several containing semi-mature and mature trees. The remnant of an old orchard is present in the northeast of the site. Residential and agricultural buildings were present whilst other habitats included introduced shrub, species-poor hedgerows, native scrub, ditches, tall ruderal and scattered trees. The proposed Country Park comprises a large field of improved grassland bounded by species-rich hedgerows and mature trees.

Habitats of moderate to high importance are hedgerows, ponds, mature broadleaved trees and orchard, all Priority Habitats and Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull BAP Habitats. Poor semi-improved grassland, improved grassland, amenity grassland, bare ground, hardstanding, introduced shrub, ditches, scrub and tall ruderal habitats are of lower ecological importance.

Protected and notable species

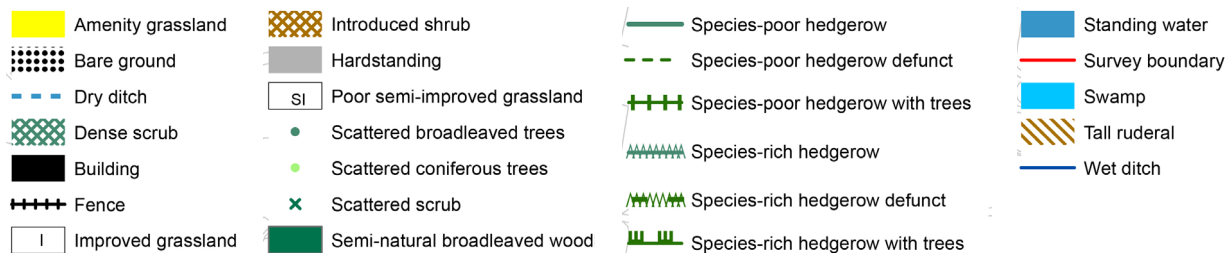
Habitats within the site could potentially support protected/notable species, including amphibians (such as great crested newt), reptiles, breeding birds, bats (including potential roosts within buildings and mature trees) and hazel dormouse. Several badger setts were recorded within the proposed development site. Several invasive plant species were also recorded, including New Zealand pygmyweed and Himalayan cotoneaster.

Conclusions

There are no overriding ecological constraints to the development of the proposed development site or Country Park. Whilst potential constraints for designated sites, habitats and protected/notable species occur, it is considered that avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures could be provided for adverse effects. Compliance with legislation relating to statutory designated sites and protected species can be achieved and 'biodiversity net gain' can be delivered.



Phase 1 Habitat Plan

























4. CONCEPT PLAN

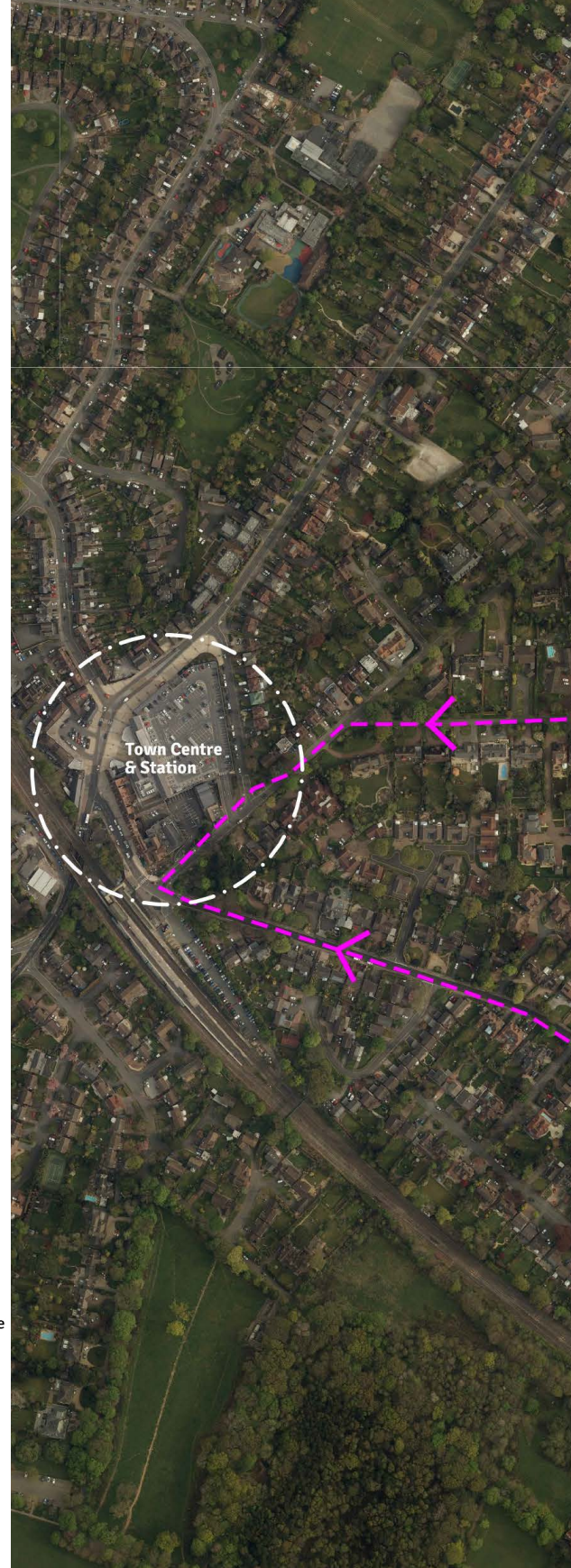
The Concept Plan presented opposite has been informed by the following design principles;

Development Form

- » Provision of approximately 9.7Ha residential development, achieving 340 using an average of 35 dwellings per hectare (35dph).
- » Delivery of a new Country Park aimed at providing landscape, biodiversity and recreational enhancements to offset the loss of the Green Belt in line with paragraph 138 of the NPPF.
- » Development will be structured to ensure the creation of a permeable, legible and safe places, with streets and spaces overlooked wherever possible.
- » The size and design of plots and dwellings will be carefully considered where development adjoins existing dwellings.
- » The proposals will be designed to ensure climate change resilience and adaptability for the future.

	Site Boundary
	Potential Primary Vehicular Access
	Potential Pedestrian Access
	Existing Pedestrian Access
	Potential Emergency Vehicular / Pedestrian / Cycle Access
	New Informal Footpath
	Primary Route
	Secondary Route
	Private Drive
	Central Park Area
	Residential Development
	Green Corridor
	Public Open Space
	Country Park Area (including car park and new recreational routes)
	Existing Trees
	Existing Hedgerow
	Area for Formal Play
	Indicative Attenuation Area
	Arden Triangle
	Existing PRoW to be Retained
	Improved pedestrian access along lane
	Link to Town Centre and Train Station

Concept Plan





Arden Triangle

Grove Road

Knowle Wood Road

Pedestrian Link

New Country Park and
Green Belt Mitigation

New Open
Space

Woodcote Drive

Pedestrian Link

Blue Lake Road

Dorridge Road

Norton Green Lane

Access and Movement

- » The scheme has been designed to maximise connectivity for sustainable modes of transport, recognising that it benefits from an exceptional location, in particular it's proximity to central Dorridge and Dorridge Rail Station.
- » Provision of a connected and accessible primary movement route, with vehicular access taken from Blue Lake Road and Knowle Wood Road. An emergency access point will be taken from Grove Road.
- » A separate access will be provided on Norton Green Lane to access the new Country Park.
- » A new network of informal footpath routes will be provided within the site and Country Park area. Their route will reflect key desire lines across the site, and ensure easy and direct access to the Country Park, existing Public Right of Way (PRoW) and Dorridge town centre and Rail Station. These routes will also function as attractive and safe pedestrian walks that encourage physical exercise and enjoyment of the outdoors.

Landscape and Ecology

- » A new Country Park is proposed for the eastern part of the site. This will be approximately 4 Ha in size and provide for a range of recreational uses. The Country Park will provide enhanced access to the retained countryside in this location and will help to mitigate the removal of land from the Green Belt as required under paragraph 138 of the NPPF.
- » Response to Phase 1 Habitat Plan and retention of moderate to high importance habitats where possible to deliver a biodiversity net gain and important green infrastructure, including habitat corridors.
- » Potential links across the central Public Open Space will be carefully considered to ensure their design and character are appropriate to the setting of the site.
- » The proposals promote a generosity of space through the provision of significant areas of open space, and the use of appropriate densities that respond to the existing built form of Dorridge.

- » The central green space will comprise a multi-functional parkland, providing areas for formal play provision, orchard planting, attenuation and informal public open space. This green character will be promoted through the creation of highly accessible green routes, enhancing landscape amenity and ecological habitat creation.
- » Existing landscape assets such as topography, tree planting and views have helped shape the structure of development, open space and green corridors within the site.
- » Existing trees on site will be retained wherever possible and provide key focal elements within an attractive green infrastructure.





Response to Design Policy and Guidance

Although at a conceptual stage; the development will be informed by policy and design principles contained in the following guidance:

The National Design Guide (MHCLG, 2019).

Ensuring the creation of a distinctive development that responds positively to the surrounding built form and thus, re-enforces a strong sense of local distinctiveness. A thorough and robust site and context analysis that informs the masterplan, including landscape and ecology led approach to shaping the structure of development will further help to aid this.

West Midlands Design Charter (WMCA, 2020)

The proposals will embody the twelve principles contained in this document wherever possible, particularly promoting health and wellbeing principles to ensure the creation of a happy and healthy development that benefits from easy access to key facilities and open space.

Building Better, Building Beautiful: Living with Beauty (MHCLG, 2020)












The proposals will aspire to create an attractive aesthetic that re-enforces a strong sense of place, also encouraging community pride and social cohesion.

Illustrative Images



5. KEY BENEFITS

- » A high quality and distinctive scheme that can deliver up to 340 new dwellings in a highly sustainable location, with key facilities and Dorridge train station within 1km (a 12 minute walk).
- » Easy access to both primary and secondary education facilities.
- » Provision of a new country park that will become a recreation asset for Dorridge, which alongside the improved public rights of way, will offset the loss of the Green Belt.
- » A clear focus on green infrastructure, ecological enhancement (with the proposals aiming to ensure significant biodiversity net gain) and the promotion of healthy, active lifestyles through the provision of attractive open spaces that are shaped by retained landscape features.
- » A new cohesive and vibrant community formed by the creation of a safe and active development based on best practice urban design principles.
- » A freehold site in single ownership that can deliver housing within the first five years of the Plan.

	Site Boundary
	Arden Triangle
	Existing PROW- Footpath
	Existing PROW- Bridleway
	Existing PROW - Grand Union Canal (Long distance route)
	Existing Local Cycle Route
	Existing Bus Stops
	Existing Bus Route
	Residential Development (currently under construction)
	Village Centre
	Green Space
	Potential New Arden Academy
	Potential New 2FE Catholic Primary School
	Proposed Green Belt Boundary
	Train Station
	Primary School
	Secondary School
	Doctors
	Petrol Station
	Allotments

Development Context Plan

