

**Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Plan
Masterplanning/Design and Design Coding
November 2017**



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Section 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Through the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Neighbourhood Planning Programme, Urban Vision Enterprise CIC has been commissioned by Locality to produce a Masterplan, Design and Design Coding document for Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Forum. The report aims to review the existing evidence base and inform the development of new housing in the Area with particular consideration to two potential strategic housing sites within the Neighbourhood Area.

This report aims to:

- Provide guidance on the design of any future development and potential land uses;
- Identify opportunities to maximise the rural characteristics and enable the community to further enjoy the surrounding countryside and Green Belt;

- Provide advice on how to enhance existing connections and assets that are identified and explore opportunity of new development to create new connections and links;
- Inform future development providing a framework for the Neighbourhood Forum to prepare design policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, and to shape future development;
- Be used in conjunction with the Heritage and Character Assessment October 2017; and
- Produce an evidence base that can be used in discussions with Solihull Council to inform any future masterplans that are prepared for the strategic housing sites.

1.2 About This Report

To prepare and produce this report the following methodology was followed informing this document:

- Collate data and review existing evidence base, including liaising with the Neighbourhood Forum;
 - Understanding and setting the planning context;
 - Undertake a site visit and record land uses;
 - Prepare an urban design analysis;
 - Work in partnership with the Neighbourhood Forum to inform the document;
 - Deliver a design workshop in the Neighbourhood Area;
 - Produce a draft report to be reviewed by the Neighbourhood Forum and incorporate the comments;
- Issue final report.

1.3 Location and Neighbourhood Area

The Neighbourhood Area is located in Solihull Metropolitan Borough. This semi-rural area is situated on the outskirts of Solihull Borough, approximately 15 miles south-east of Birmingham and is located south of Solihull Town Centre, which is the closest large town. The neighbourhood area consists of the main settlements of Dorridge, Knowle and Bentley Heath which are surrounded by open countryside and Green Belt.

The neighbourhood area is well connected to national and international transport networks. It has direct linkages to the M42 motorway; the Birmingham to London rail line runs through the area and the area is only 6 miles from Birmingham International Airport.

The village of Knowle is centred around a Conservation Area, which is focused around the High Street. The village of Dorridge has 2 smaller Conservation Areas: Station Approach and Granville Road. Dorridge is a stop on the Birmingham to London

rail network with a station in the centre of the village. The third village, Bentley Heath, has a linear form, along Widney Road. The Neighbourhood Area also includes many statutory and locally listed buildings.

Map of Neighbourhood Area:



(Neighbourhood Plan Area Application, Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Forum September 2017)

Section 2

2.1 Baseline Data

<p>Estimated Population Size 18958 (2011 Census)</p>	<p>Number of Households 7624 (2011 Census)</p>	<p>Average Rainfall per annum 712.4mm</p>
<p>Average High Temperature per annum 23.2°C</p>	<p>Average Low Temperature per annum 8.2°C</p>	<p>Average Number of Hours of Sunshine per annum 1445</p>
<p>121m (397ft) above sea level</p>	<p>15 Miles from Birmingham</p>	<p>2.9 Miles from Solihull</p>
<p>Average Housing Density approximately 20 DPH</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Area includes Junction 5 M42</p>	<p>Average Download speed 57.3 mbs</p>
<p>2 Landscape Designations and 2 Local Nature Reserves in the neighbourhood area</p>	<p>50 Listed Buildings or Items in the neighbourhood area and 3 conservation areas</p>	<p>Total Area of the Strategic Sites 50ha</p>

2.2 Context SWOT Analysis

As part of the methodology this report is informed and based upon the identified needs and issues of the community. Urban Vision Enterprise CIC consulted with the Neighbourhood Forum and produced the following SWOT analysis of the Neighbourhood Area to be used as a tool to inform the design workshop.

Strengths:

- Separation of the villages from Solihull and other settlements.
- Village feel.
- Easy access to the open countryside.
- Conservation Areas.
- Low-density housing.
- Open space in the built area.
- Green streetscape.
- Features such as low boundary walls/hedging.
- Good schools.

- Independent shops.
- Quality of property.
- Good transport links.

Weaknesses:

- Lack of parking both on and off street.
- Infrastructure not keeping pace with new developments.
- Poor design of new developments (large and small) in relation to existing developments.
- Lack of design for practical elements such as bin storage, parking, garages.
- New developments not taking ground levels into account.
- Boundary treatments, particularly the edge to the open countryside.
- Lack of cycling provision.

Opportunities:

- Reinforce the special character of the three villages.
- Deliver improved infrastructure (community, recreation and transportation).

- Deliver better quality schemes.
- Schemes to be taken to Design Review.
- Build tenure blind developments.
- Retain hedgerows and boundary treatments and replicate in new development.
- Encourage retail uses.
- Allocate development in places best for community.
- Deliver services and infrastructure for young people and the elderly.
- Address the need raised in the AECOM HNA particularly for dementia homes and starter homes.

Threats:

- Loss of green belt 'The Meridian Gap' and natural landscape.
- Proposed scale of new development adversely affecting village character and infrastructure.
- Erosion of separation of the villages from other settlements.
- Lack of delivery of infrastructure or poor timing.
- Overdevelopment of both infill plots and large plots.

- Applying higher densities in new developments (upper figure is 55 DPH).
- Poor design of development.
- Balance between land efficiency and green belt. How do we get the balance?
- Inappropriate traffic schemes/junction works e.g. traffic lights.
- Existing rights of way/access to countryside being diverted and closed in by panel fences.

In addition to the SWOT analysis members of the Neighbourhood Forum took Urban Vision Enterprise CIC on a guided tour of recent housing developments. During this site visit there were some common design issues and opportunities that were raised about recent housing developments, these included:

Bin Storage: Developments also had not fully considered bin storage for properties and often these were stored directly in front of properties or informally grouped in parking areas.

Affordable Homes: These included the appearance and siting of affordable homes, often clustered together and did not include the same design features of other similar sized properties within the development such as a porch. None of the developments were tenure blind.



Image: Affordable Homes at rear of development.

On and Off Street Parking: In one site currently under construction the parking courts were poorly designed with no overlooking from neighbouring properties or lighting installed. Other parking approaches within the curtilage provided garages, which could not be accessed without blocking the highway during the process. Poorly integrated parking areas and under provision of suitable parking within developments made maneuvering through the site difficult.

Topography: A site with a varying ground level has sited apartments on the highest ground, which then dominates the skyline towering above semi-detached dwellings located on lower levels.

Integrating the existing natural features: Some developments missed opportunities to make better linkages with the open countryside where land adjoined Public Rights of Way, however some developments also responded positively to landscape features, integrating them well into the development, enhancing the character of the area.

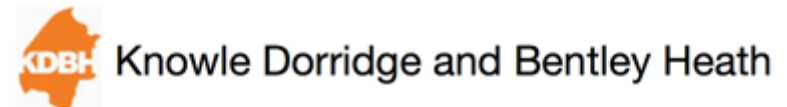


2.3 Emerging Neighbourhood Plan Vision

The emerging Neighbourhood Plan has developed a broad vision that supports the sustainable growth of its community over the Neighbourhood Plan period to 2033. The vision states:

“Our vision is to conserve KDBH as a unique place within Solihull Borough, encircled by unspoilt open countryside and characterised by its community spirit, attractive green spaces, leafy green streets and well preserved historic buildings and conservation areas within its three villages. KDBH will have a vibrant local economy and will retain its importance in providing an attractive residential area that supports the economic success of the local and regional economies while remaining separated from the rest of Solihull, but well connected to Solihull, Birmingham, the Greater West Midlands and London.”

(pg13, Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Plan, Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Forum, November 2017)



Draft Neighbourhood Plan 2018 - 2033
Pre-Submission Consultation, November 2017

The Neighbourhood Plan supports its vision with a number of objectives that include:

HOUSING	Plan for proportionate growth in new, high quality homes without over-provision and without compromising what makes our villages distinctive. Plan for new homes to be well integrated into the existing community and built environment, sited in sustainable locations, and meet locally identified, changing needs for all life stages. Plan for an aging population.
DESIGN	Improve the quality and appropriateness of future new developments by focusing strongly on robust application of policies in the design stage. Require production of 'Concept Masterplans', in discussion with the community (through the Neighbourhood Forum), for any new development in KDBH of over 20 houses.
VILLAGE CHARACTER AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	Prioritise local distinctiveness in every element of change and growth. Safeguard our natural environment, maintain a high quality landscape and enhance biodiversity through sensitive development that protects the setting of our settlements. Protect and enhance the Neighbourhood's heritage and open spaces
TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION	Ensure adequate parking in all new housing developments, seek on-going improvements to roads and parking, and improve traffic management to facilitate flow at key locations. Target a range of measures to reduce reliance on car usage.
EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES	Ensure sufficient capacity in local schools to accommodate any new housing proposed and to allow families in KDBH to access their choice of primary school. Ensure community facilities and services (including healthcare, sport and recreation) meet the needs of the diverse and growing community through protection of, investment in, and ongoing access to new and improved facilities in tandem with new housing growth.
EMPLOYMENT, INC RETAIL AND OTHER COMMERCIAL USES	Recognise the importance of local amenity shops and businesses, support and maintain their presence, encourage retention of existing employers and promote appropriate new economic and employment opportunities in suitable locations.
COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE	Seek on-going improvements to roads and pavements, the utility infrastructure and digital connectivity - especially mobile phone reception and broadband.

(pg14, Knowle, Dorrige and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Plan, Knowle, Dorrige and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Forum, November 2017)

The policies of the Neighbourhood Plan will be instrumental in helping to achieve these objectives. With specific reference to this report section 6 village character and natural environment; section 7 housing; section 8 design; and section 9 traffic and transport all have a role in achieving and informing the future design of any strategic housing development in the Neighbourhood Area.

One of the key aims of the Neighbourhood Plan is to inform and improve the design, layout and integration of new development into the villages, particularly new housing developments. The scale of new development being proposed by Solihull Council in its draft Local Plan is not supported by the community or by the Housing Needs Assessment undertaken by AECOM on behalf of the Neighbourhood Forum.

The Neighbourhood Plan makes clear that local residents oppose the scale of development and the two potential strategic housing sites which would have unacceptable impacts on the capacity of the infrastructure in the area. Those who attended the design workshop again made the issue clear. It was apparent that the scale of growth and poor standards of design

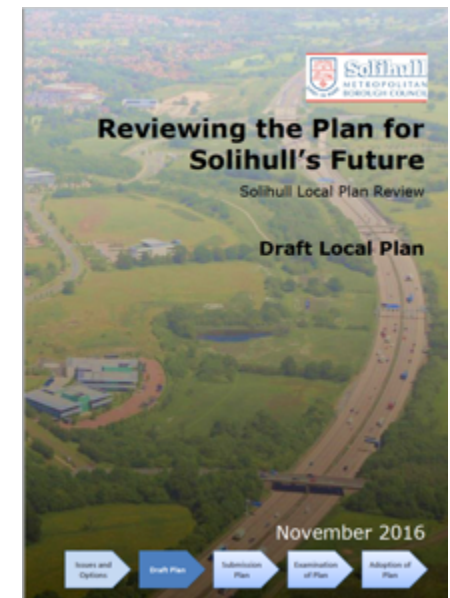
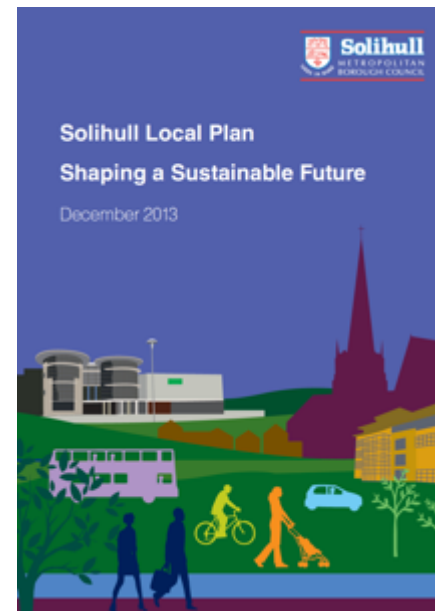
of more recent developments have led to the view that the character and 'feel' of the area is being lost.

Some of these points can be addressed through informing design and approaches are highlighted in the recommendations of this report.

2.4 Local Planning Policy

The Solihull Local Plan, Shaping a Sustainable Future, was adopted in December 2013.

The emerging Local Plan Document, Reviewing the Plan for Solihull's Future, Draft Local Plan, November 2016, it is envisaged that it will be adopted in late 2018.



Adopted Solihull Local Plan: Shaping a Sustainable Future (December 2013)

The current Solihull Local Plan was adopted in 2013, but was subsequently subject to a legal challenge based on its overall housing requirement.

To ensure that a proper planning framework is in place to respond to the changed circumstances, Solihull MBC is undertaking a review of the Local Plan. This is considered further below.

Policies within the current Local Plan that related to character and heritage include:

- P5 – Provision of Land for Housing;
- P14 – Amenity;
- P15 – Securing Design Quality;
- P16 – Conservation of Heritage Assets and Local Distinctiveness; and
- P17 – Countryside and Green Belt.

Policy P5 (Provision of Land for Housing) seeks to allocate land for the delivery of new homes during the plan period (2006-2028). Policy P5 states that “new housing will be supported on unidentified sites in accessible locations where they contribute towards meeting identified borough-wide housing needs and towards enhancing local character and distinctiveness”.

Policy 14 (Amenity) considers the amenity of existing and potential occupiers of homes, businesses, and other uses in the context of new development proposals, and the Council will:

- *Permit development only if it respects the amenity of existing and proposed occupiers and would be a good neighbour;*
- *Consider the visual and other amenities of potential occupiers and users of new developments close to overhead powerlines and substations. Developers will be expected to locate and design new developments so as to minimise the visual and other amenity impacts;*

- *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; and*
- *Protect those parts of the countryside in the Borough that retain a dark sky from the impacts of light pollution. Development involving external lighting outside established settlements will be permitted only where significant lighting already exists, or the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the impact of the lighting on the countryside. Any lighting scheme should be the minimum required for the purposes of the development and should avoid light spillage and harmful effects on biodiversity.*

Policy P15 (Securing Design Quality) seeks to promote quality of place through embedding good design within local policy. Policy P15 states “all development proposals will be expected to

achieve good quality, inclusive and sustainable design”. The following key principles will be expected to be met:

- *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;*
- *Ensures that new development achieves the highest possible standard of environmental performance through sustainable design and construction and the location and layout of the development in accordance with the guidance provided in Policy P9 – Climate Change;*
- *Secures the sustainable long-term use of new development through flexible, robust and future-proofed design, e.g. high-speed digital connectivity;*
- *Makes appropriate space for water within the development, using sustainable drainage (SuDS) principles, to minimise and adapt to the risk of flooding.*

Further guidance is provided in Policy P11 – Water Management;

- *Conserves and enhances biodiversity, landscape quality and considers the impact on and opportunities for green infrastructure at the earliest opportunity in the design process. Further guidance is provided in Policy P10 – Natural Environment;*
- *Integrates the natural environment within the development through the provision of gardens, quality open space and/or access to, enhancement or extension of the green infrastructure network. Further guidance is provided in Policy P20 – Provision for Open Space, Children’s Play, Sport, Recreation and Leisure; and*
- *Creates attractive, safe, active, legible and uncluttered streets and public spaces which are accessible, easily maintained and encourage walking and cycling and reduce crime and the fear of crime.*

Proposals for new development will be expected to “contribute to or create a sense of place”, through:

- *Reflecting heritage assets and their setting in the design process;*
- *Integrating landscape into the development;*
- *Promoting diversity through a mix of uses within the site; and*
- *The incorporation of public art.*

New residential developments will be expected to reflect the following, though the Council will take into account the economics of a particular proposal and how the viability of a scheme is affected by particular costs associated with them:

- *Building for Life 12 (or its equivalent); and*
- *Lifetime Homes.*

Proposals will also need to guidance set out in the New Housing in Context SPG.

Applicants will also be expected to reflect urban design principles from the following (or their equivalent):

- *Urban Design Compendium 1 and 2;*
- *By Design;*
- *Manual for Streets 1 and 2;*
- *Car Parking: What Works Where; and*
- *Secured by Design.*

Applicants are encouraged to engage with the local planning authority early in the design process, and should demonstrate that they have developed their proposals in accordance with the 'Assessment-Involvement-Evaluation-Design' process outlined in national guidance around Design and Access Statements. In addition, where major developments are proposed, it should be demonstrated how the local community has been consulted and engaged in the design process, and significant developments should be subject to the design review process.

Policy P16 (Conservation of Heritage Assets and Local Distinctiveness) is designed to reflect the recognition of "the importance of the historic environment to the Borough's local

character and distinctiveness, its cultural, social, environmental and economic benefits and the effect this has on civic pride", and development proposals will be expected to demonstrate how the following characteristics have been conserved:

- *The historical development and variety of architectural styles within the Mature Suburbs and the larger established rural settlements, including Knowle;*
- *The Arden landscape, historic villages, hamlets, farmsteads, country and lesser houses and the distinct medieval core of historic rural settlements including Knowle;*
- *Parks, gardens and landscape including common, woodland, heathland, and distinctive fieldscapes as defined in the Warwickshire Historic Landscape Characterisation; and*
- *The canal and railway network, including disused railway lines and working stations including Dorridge, together with associated structures.*

Development proposals 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”. Heritage assets include:

- *Listed Buildings;*
- *Scheduled Ancient Monuments;*
- *Registered Parks and Gardens;*
- *Conservation Areas; and*
- *Non-designated assets such as assets positively identified within Solihull’s Historic Environment Record, or those identified on the Local List.*

All proposals affecting the historic environment will be expected to have considered and utilised evidence from the Historic Environment Record to inform the design process. This should be evidenced within the Design and Access Statement, or – for proposals of significance – in a Heritage Statement.

Where proposals seek to modify heritage assets to help address the effects of climate change, they should be sympathetic to the

asset and its setting, conserving its special interest and significance.

Policy P17 (Countryside and Green Belt) seeks to safeguard the “best and most versatile” agricultural land in the Borough, and encourages the continued use of remaining land for farming. Development of best and most versatile land will only be permitted where:

- *There is an overriding need for the development proposed;*
- *There is insufficient lower grade land available; or*
- *Available lower grade land has an environmental significance outweighing the agricultural considerations.*

Rural diversification will normally be supported providing the location is appropriate, its scale is appropriate to its location, and does not harm the Green Belt, or conservation or enhancement policies.

The Council will only permit inappropriate development in very special circumstances, and in addition to national policy relating to Green Belt, the following provisions will also apply:

- *Development involving the replacement, extension or alteration of buildings within the Green Belt will not be permitted if it will harm the need to retain smaller more affordable housing or the purposes of including land within the Green Belt;*
- *Limited infilling will not be considered to be inappropriate development within the Green Belt settlements, providing this would not have an adverse effect on the character of the settlements. Limited infilling shall be interpreted as the filling of a small gap within an otherwise built-up frontage with not more than two dwellings;*
- *The reasonable expansion of established businesses into the Green Belt will be allowed where the proposal would make a significant contribution to the local economy or employment, providing that appropriate mitigation can be secured;*
- *Where the reuse of buildings or land is proposed, the new use, and any associated use of land surrounding the building, should not conflict with, nor have a materially greater impact on, the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it, and the form, bulk and general design of the buildings shall be in keeping with their surroundings; and*
- *Where waste management operations involving inappropriate development are proposed in the Green Belt, the contribution of new capacity towards the treatment gap identified in the Borough may amount to very special circumstances, providing the development accords with the waste management policy of the Local Plan.*

2.5 Strategic Housing Sites

The emerging Local Plan Document, Reviewing the Plan for Solihull's Future, Draft Local Plan, November 2016, is expected to be adopted in late 2018. The emerging Local Plan identifies two potential strategic housing sites:

- proposed housing allocation 8, Hampton Road, Knowle' which includes 2 plots and
- proposed housing allocation 9, South of Knowle, Knowle'.

Indicatively the local planning authority have indicated that site 8, measuring 13ha, could deliver 300 homes. This would equate to a density of approximately 23 dwellings per hectare if you considered the whole area for housing development, however given other provisions on site the housing density could reflect numbers more akin to 30-35 dwellings per hectare.

Site 9, measuring 46ha, could deliver 750 new homes. This would equate to a density of approximately 16 dwellings per hectare. Again Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council has indicated that this could be higher due to other land uses in the

site. It is understood by the Neighbourhood Forum that concept masterplans will be prepared for these sites. (NB This is a requirement of the Draft Local Plan) It should also be noted that the actual developable land has not been calculated for this site and given the proposed additional land uses it is unclear what the housing density will actually be.

However, the emerging Local Plan policy P5 'provision of land for housing' makes clear that the density of new housing will seek to use the land efficiently whilst maintaining the local character and distinctiveness.

These sites are both within the Neighbourhood Area. Should these sites come forward for development in the future, the aim should be to create distinctive places, which fit well with the character of the area. These should be informed by the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan and indeed reflect the character features identified in the following section and other design principles identified through the workshop.

There is the opportunity for these two areas of potential development to deliver community benefit as well as delivering

housing. There is the potential for the Neighbourhood Plan to identify infrastructure and community facility needs, which may be considered in future developments.

The emerging Local Plan identifies in the schedule of allocated housing sites a summary for each area including the period for delivery, site constraints, reasons and conditions and the likely infrastructure requirements. The description and summary for site 8 and site 9 are shown in the following tables taken from the emerging Local Plan.

Schedule of Housing Site 8

8 (166 & 213) ⁵⁰	Hampton Road	Knowle	Yes	13	300	✓	✓		Purnell's brook. Existing playing pitches. Small portion of northern site is a Local Wildlife Site.	Split site. Northern section has a cumulative Green Belt score of 7 and southern section of 11. The eastern edge of Knowle, Dorridge & Bentley Heath (KDBH), which adjoins more	Speed reduction and access improvements along Hampton Road. Highway capacity improvements at A4141 junction. Replacement playing pitch provision, required on or off-site.
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⁴⁹ SHELAA 229: S=1, Av=1, Ac=3. N.B. Achievability due to low value area in multiple use/ownership. Significant site clearance and relocation required.

⁵⁰ SHELAA 166: S=1, Av=1, Ac=1.

SHELAA 213: S=1, Av=1, Ac=1.

Solihull MBC

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(Pg 149,150, Reviewing the Plan for Solihull's Future, Draft Local Plan, November 2016)

Reviewing the Plan for Solihull's Future

Draft Local Plan

LPR Ref (SHELAA Refs ⁴¹)	Site Name	Area	Green Belt	Site Area (ha)	Site Capacity ⁴²	Delivery years			Site constraints	Reasons and Conditions	Likely Infrastructure Requirements
						1-5	6-10	11-15			
									Historic setting of Knowle Conservation Area. However, the western edge separates the main Solihull conurbation from the villages of KDBH and prevents merging of these distinct localities. Furthermore, the River Blythe SSSI winds through this gap, with resulting large areas of floodplain and biodiversity interest, which form an important green and blue corridor. In accessibility terms, the sites also score more highly than those on the western edge of KDBH, due to proximity to services in Knowle village centre. The southern section scores highly in Green Belt terms due to views into Knowle Conservation Area, and responding to the	open countryside, scores more highly overall than the western edge, which has more urbanising influences and ribbon development. Retain green infrastructure connectivity within site and links to wider countryside. Increased primary and secondary school provision. SUDs. Local healthcare facilities. 50% affordable housing.	Pedestrian and cycling connectivity enhancements towards Knowle local centre. Potential canal towpath improvements. Provision of, or contribution to, existing play area/parks and open space.

Schedule of Housing Site 9

LPR Ref (SHELAA Refs ⁴¹)	Site Name	Area	Green Belt	Site Area (ha)	Site Capacity ⁴²	Delivery years			Site constraints	Reasons and Conditions	Likely Infrastructure Requirements
						1-5	6-10	11-15			
										historic setting of KCA would be a key factor in lay-out and design.	
9 (1010, inc. 148, 149, 151, 152, 153, 154 & 156) ⁵¹	South of Knowle (between Station Road, Warwick Road and Grove Road)	Knowle	Yes	46	750	✓	✓	✓	Arden Academy on constrained site. Existing pond. Cuttle brook. Potential Local Wildlife Site through southern part of site.	Cumulative Green Belt score of 5. Defensible Green Belt boundary along A4141 and Grove Road. Make best use of existing green infrastructure and biodiversity assets; to retain rural fringe character along boundary roads. Avoids intrusion into Knowle Conservation Area. Respect landscape character and historic setting of listed buildings to south of site. Accessible to Knowle and Dorridge local centres; accessibility to services would be improved as a result of development.	Highway capacity and access improvements along A4141 & B4101. Requires multiple points of vehicular access. Increased primary and secondary school provision; submitted scheme includes replacement secondary school. Pedestrian and cycling connectivity enhancements towards Knowle and Dorridge local centre, and across site to replacement school. Provision of play area and open space, making best use of existing green and blue infrastructure assets. Community access to school facilities out of hours, such as playing pitches. SUDs. Local healthcare facilities. 50% affordable housing.

(Pg 151, Reviewing the Plan for Solihull's Future, Draft Local Plan, November 2016)

Section 3

3.1 Design Characteristics

This section considers some of the key design characteristics of the area that should be considered in any future design and masterplanning of housing development. These were identified as part of the Heritage and Character Assessment in October 2017.

Housing Density

Lower housing density is a key characteristic of the neighbourhood area, particularly as it reflects its semi-rural nature (whilst being in close proximity to a major urban area). Centred around three villages, the Neighbourhood Forum has recorded 14 housing developments which span a period from Victorian developments through to the most recent in 2017. With the exception of area 13 St Johns Close and area 14 Fennis Close, the average density stands at about 17 dwellings per hectare.

The emerging local plan policy P5 ‘provision of land for housing’ makes clear that the density of new housing will seek to use the land efficiently whilst maintaining the local character and distinctiveness.

This is a major factor to consider in any future design briefs or masterplans, ensuring development reflects the locality whilst being viable and positively contributing to the local housing need.

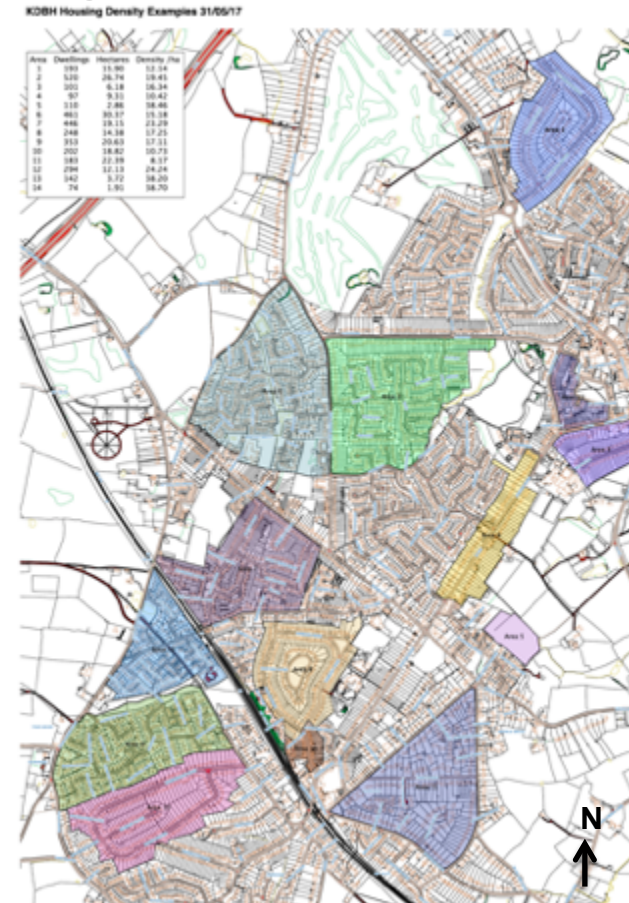
The following map and table illustrate the evidence base gathered by the Neighbourhood Forum, and can be viewed in more detail in appendix A of this report.

Table of Housing Density

Area	Dwellings	Hectares	Density /ha
1	193	15.90	12.14
2	520	26.74	19.45
3	101	6.18	16.34
4	97	9.31	10.42
5	110	2.86	38.46
6	461	30.37	15.18
7	446	19.15	23.29
8	248	14.38	17.25
9	353	20.63	17.11
10	202	18.82	10.73
11	183	22.39	8.17
12	294	12.13	24.24
13	142	3.72	38.20
14	74	1.91	38.70

(Housing Density Mapping, Knowle, Dorrige and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Forum, 2017)

Map of Housing Density in Neighbourhood Area:



(Housing Density Mapping, Knowle, Dorrige and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Forum, 2017)

Natural Landscape Character

The Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), produced by Waterman Infrastructure and Environment Limited for Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council in December 2016 sets out the specific landscape characteristics of the Neighbourhood Area. It describes the setting as an area that covers approximately 5.8km² 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, specially 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.”

(Pg 26, Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment, Waterman Infrastructure and Environment Limited, December 2016)

Critically this report identifies an area, which forms part of the Neighbourhood Area. The section ‘Knowle and Dorridge Fridge LCA3’ shown in pink on the map identifies the key characteristics of the natural landscape into two categories:

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:

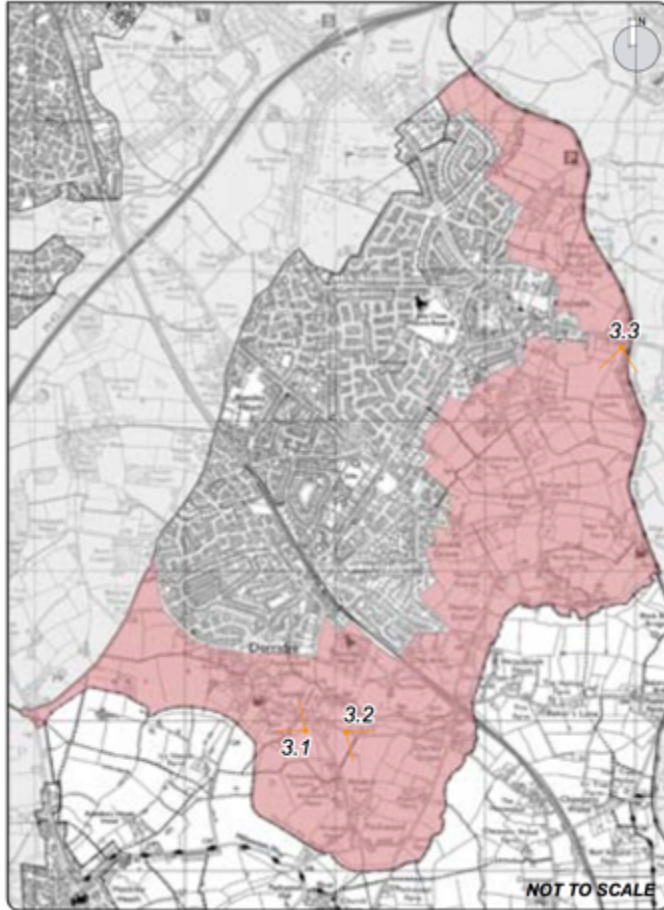
- *The land gently slopes from a high point of 130m AOD down to 110m AOD from west to east eventually falling towards the River Blythe in LCA 4.*
- *Purnells Brook, Cuttle Brook and Canal Feeder along*

with their associated springs form the main drainage pattern within the LCA. These waterways and watercourse are a valuable landscape asset to the area.”

(Pg 26, Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment, Waterman Infrastructure and Environment Limited, December 2016)

The landscape character assessment makes clear the landscape sensitivity is medium and that the overall landscape value is medium. This results in an overall conclusion that the natural landscape with key features identified has a low capacity to accommodate new development. This is a key factor that should be reflected in the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that the natural environment and in particular the natural landscape features identified are protected.

Map of the Landscape Character Area 3



(Pg 26, Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment, Waterman Infrastructure and Environment Limited, December 2016)

The Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment also identifies key sensitivities and pressures on the natural environment. Within the Neighbourhood Area it identifies the following:

- *“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 old barns and vernacular buildings is impacting upon landscape character.”*

(Pg 27, Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment, Waterman Infrastructure and Environment Limited, December 2016)

These key sensitivities and pressures should be considered when preparing any masterplans for any strategic housing

developments within the Neighbourhood Area.

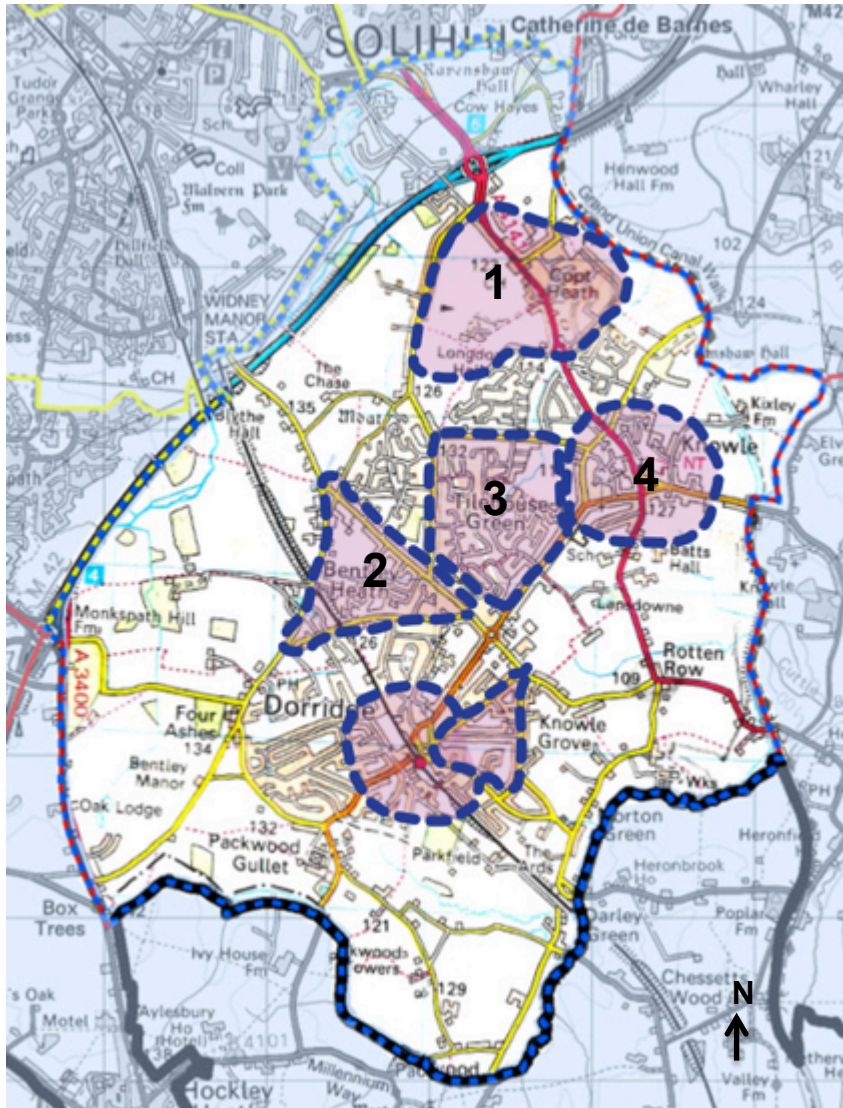
Character Areas

Informed by the considerations of British Standard ‘BS 7913:2013, Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings’ and through a character assessment undertaken in the Heritage and Character report October 2017, six character areas were identified in the Neighbourhood Area and are illustrated on the adjacent plan. These include a mixture of areas from established village centres through to distinct residential neighbourhoods.

This section goes on to explore each character area in more detail and identify common features throughout.

- 1: Gateway Area;
- 2: Bentley Heath;
- 3: Tilehouse Green Residential;
- 4: Knowle;
- 5: Dorridge; and
- 6: The Golden Triangle.

Map of Character Areas



Although very different in many aspects some broader key design principles that were a common thread throughout have been identified below. These could be translated in to a character policy for the Neighbourhood Plan or be used to inform any future masterplanning in the neighbourhood area:

- Building set back from the road in residential areas apart from in village centres;
- Wide roads, with tree lined streets are a strong characteristic;
- Good quality public realm with well maintained streets and spaces;
- Street furniture including signage and lighting is predominantly set on green posts which add to the non-urban character;
- Connectivity and Space: The character area is highly permeable with a variety of safe well-designed pedestrian routes, including natural surveillance, legible streets. There is limited integration of cycle routes, which are more prevalent in other character areas;

- Natural Landscaping: Natural boundary treatments and mature planted gardens are a distinct characteristic of the area. In more formal designed estates within the area mature trees and grassed areas provide green spaces and separation between developments;
- Predominantly residential properties have private front and rear gardens; and
- Broad Materials Palette of Brick, Tile and Render with wood used for decoration.

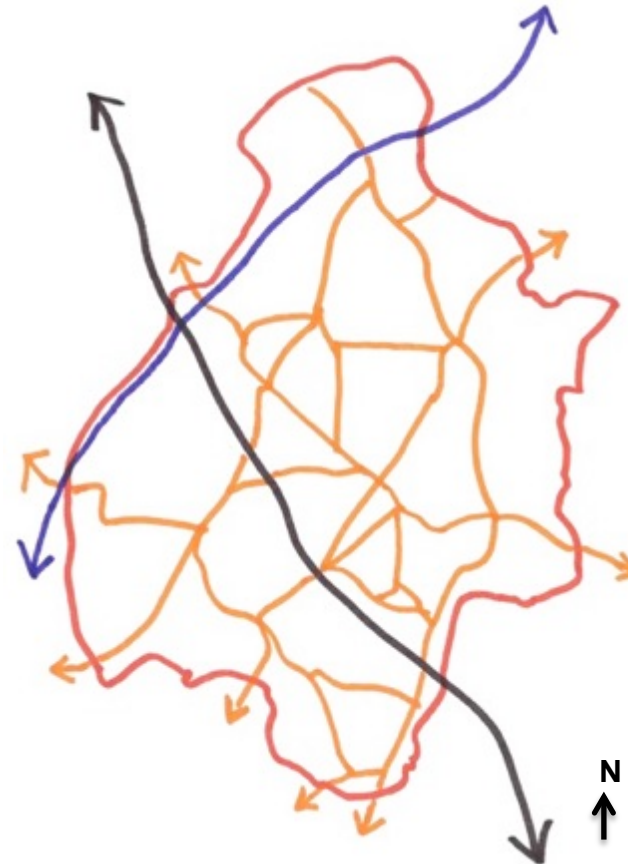
Movement and Connectivity

The north-west of the area is crossed by the M42 motorway, with junction 5 of the M42 in the northern part of the area as shown in blue on the connectivity plan. There are two 'A' roads through the area, the A4141 which runs from the Solihull, across the M42 and into the village of Knowle in the northern part of the area. The A3400, forms part of the Neighbourhood Area boundary to the south-east. The rest of the area is characterised by 'B' roads, minor roads, and residential streets, typical of a rural landscape. The main connections are reflected in orange on the adjacent plan.

There is also a railway line that runs north-south through the neighbourhood area linking Birmingham to London. The railway line includes a operational station in the village of Dorridge.

Key:			
	Railway Line		Main Vehicle Routes
	M42		Neighbourhood Area

Map of the movement and connectivity in the Neighbourhood Area:



3.2 Neighbourhood Area Design Features

Informed by the Heritage and Character Assessment in October 2017, this section considers some of the key design features and principles of the Neighbourhood Area that should be applied in any future design and masterplanning of housing development.

- Urban and Rural Transition: Located on the periphery of the green belt and open countryside. The key character here is the transition between the built form and the open countryside. Some developments are more sensitive to this transition than others, retaining hedgerows and mature planting, or considering the spacing between buildings, reflecting a lower density of development and looser urban grain;
- Recent developments continue design characteristics, set back from the road, including private garden space;
- Clear cycle routes and linkages to a wider network;
- Served by 'Local Centres' proximity to services or three key villages;
- Robust building types: in recent years there have been developments which have included re-using existing large bespoke houses or replacing one for one structures to create smaller apartments. These developments help to address housing needs while considering the setting and context of the area, with limited evidence from the street of their multiple dwelling use;
- Natural boundary treatments;
- Large properties are set back in suitably sized plots with front and rear gardens; and
- Off street parking, limited on street parking available.

3.3 Design Workshop

Good design is an intrinsic value within the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Forum is also keen to ensure that the policies of the plan address community need and meet the aspirations of the wider community.

Using the SWOT analysis and results from the Heritage and Character Assessment report, October 2017 a baseline of key issues, aspirations and characteristics of the neighbourhood area was prepared.

Urban Vision Enterprise CIC then translated this into a themed interactive community workshop that was delivered in partnership with the neighbourhood forum. Entitled 'Developing our design, building on our character' the forum publicised the event in posters, e-newsletter to forum members and online. The event was attended by about 40 to 50 people, which included a number of forum members and people from the wider community.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM
Serving Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath

Home News Plan Membership Members Area Forum Events SMBC Community Documents About Us

FORUM MEETINGS AND EVENTS

NEXT FORUM MEETING - WED 18 OCTOBER
Arden Academy Main Hall, 7pm

Main Agenda Items:
7pm - 7:30pm AGM (Members only). Notice of AGM [Here](#)
7.30pm onwards: Open Forum (all welcome)

'Developing Our Design, Building on Our Character'
A special interactive workshop led by the consultant from Urban Vision Enterprise CIC who is currently undertaking our KDBH 'Heritage and Character' and 'Urban Design/Master Planning' studies.

This drop in event enables anyone in the community to get involved and help shape and inform the design and character policies of the Neighbourhood Plan. In the workshop, there will be an opportunity to explore the possibilities of informing the design of future development and help identify the special character features of our Neighbourhood Area.

Calendar: OCTOBER 2017

MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5

No Events Found

OPEN FULL CALENDAR

3.4 Analysis of Results from Workshop

The interactive workshop included stations set around the school hall, each with two activities and supported by a Neighbourhood Forum member. The themes that were covered included:

- Building for Life;
- Draft Heritage and Character Assessment Character Areas;
- Housing Density in the Neighbourhood Area;
- Local Green Spaces;
- Place Check and Characteristics;
- Site Analysis for Strategic Housing Site 8;
- Site Analysis for Strategic Housing Site 9;
- Transport and Connections; and
- Views and Vistas.

The aim of the workshop was to provide information, get feedback and test design concepts and approaches to inform the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Specifically, the event enabled an opportunity for feedback of the character areas and to share some key evidence gathered by the Neighbourhood Forum on housing density. At the workshop we also tested design approaches to inform new development and better understand the issues and aspirations of developing the two strategic housing sites should they be adopted in the future.

The results that were gathered have been transcribed as they were written in the following pages:

Building for Life:

Presenting a description of Building for Life and the 12 questions applied through the process, delegates were encouraged to consider the questions and discuss would they apply this type of design criteria as a whole, partially or add any new elements.

The results were that specifically people identified the following key aspects:

- Car parking, for residents and visitors;

- Central play area/park like Bentley Heath;
- Traffic flow and timings e.g. school drop off;
- Low speeds throughout the Arden Triangle development 20mph until reaching the periphery;
- Importance of maintaining green open spaces;
- All questions should be considered;
- Green spaces and mature trees.



Draft Heritage and Character Assessment Character Areas:

Following the production of the draft Heritage and Character Assessment, the proposed six character areas identified were tabled. This included an analysis of each area, listing the special characteristics or distinct features of each as well as illustrating some common design principles applied broadly throughout the Neighbourhood Area.

These were well received with no amendments suggested. People who attended the event commented on how there were some common threads between the Neighbourhood Area and how these should be reflected in new development. One example highlighted was that mature trees are a prominent feature in the streetscene throughout the Neighbourhood Area, and how these help to maintain a rural feel and natural landscape.

Housing Density in the Neighbourhood Area:

This was a great opportunity to showcase a detailed evidence base produced by the Neighbourhood Forum that examined the housing densities of developments across the Neighbourhood Area. It provided a clear picture that the average housing density is 17 dwellings per hectare which is much lower than what the Local Planning Authority are proposing to apply to the proposed strategic housing sites. This was used to inform the comments people then made on the proposed strategic housing sites.

Local Green Spaces:

The Neighbourhood Plan is exploring whether to make Local Green Space designations. The Neighbourhood Forum also wanted to gather some additional information about the green spaces within the Neighbourhood Area. This activity provided the opportunity for people to nominate potential Local Green Spaces that could be tested against the National Planning Policy

Framework (NPPF) criteria should this be taken forward in the Neighbourhood Plan.



Name and Address Please put a sticker on the map and number it to match the number in the table.	Description and purposes	Quality of facility (including any deficiencies)
Green space, 007 Bentley Heath and Dorridge Green, bounded to the north.	Historical, general open space Area to around 2.5 hectares. Good for walking through natural green space to both parcels and other sites.	Good to well maintained These sites of the space are located in high rise areas of surrounding housing, resulting in poor surroundings.
W. Village Green	Local village green Good for walking through natural green space to both parcels and other sites.	It provides a good view of the area and is well maintained.
Green Area Pool near Bentley Heath Green	General open space, around 1.5 hectares, good walking route with good views of the area.	Views of the area of high value.

Images of Local Green Spaces recorded at the workshop.

At the event the Knowle Society confirmed they had a list of Local Green Spaces in that area and would pass those on to the Neighbourhood Forum. In addition to this list a further 11 were suggested. These included:

- SSSI and Knowle Locks and Grand Union Canal; Streamside Trust land and Purnells Brook Corridor;
- Green spaces around Dorridge (recreation and pasture);
- 2 Village Greens with associated Village green status in

Knowle;

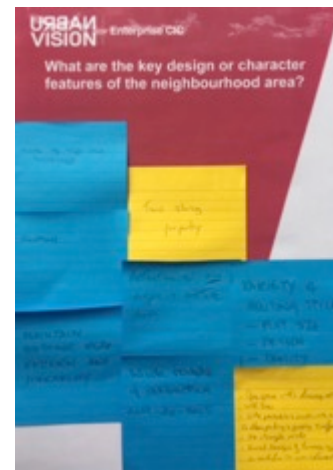
- Mind Garden at Arden Academy;
- Wooded area along Warwick Road;
- Green area and pool near Pool End Close;
- Wychwood Roundabout and areas surrounding it; and
- Grass verges and mature trees on A4141 approaching Knowle.



Place Check and Characteristics:

Posing a basic set of three questions this interactive element provided an opportunity for people to explore and detail the special characteristics of the Neighbourhood Area.

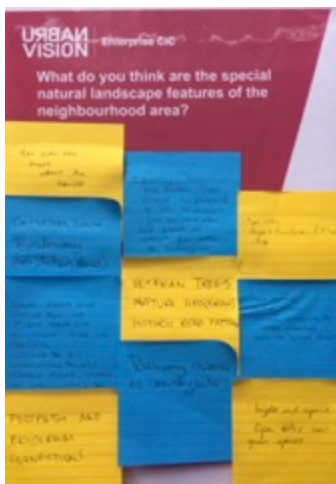
Question 1: What are the key design or character features of the neighbourhood area?



- Lack of high rise buildings;
- Two storey properties;
- Quietness;

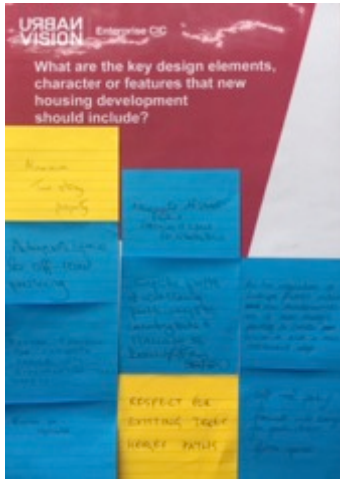
- Maintaining existing road pattern and hierarchy;
- Wide roads and attractive cul-de-sacs;
- Retention of ALL hedges and mature trees;
- Variety of housing styles, plot size, design and density;
- Open spaces within housing estates with trees;
- Wide pavements and roads wide enough to allow parked and passing traffic to pass;
- No straight roads;
- Varied designs of houses in groups so each has its own character.

Question 2: What do you think are the special natural landscape features of the neighbourhood area?



- You can see trees above the houses;
- Corbetts Lane bridleway off Station Road;
- Safe area for children to play safely without the risk of traffic, could be by integrating small green areas linked to countryside;
- Footpath and bridleway connections;
- Existing hedgerows and mature trees should be preserved to hide development from the road view and a pleasant outlook from within the development;
- Veteran trees;
- Mature hedgerows;
- Historic road pattern;
- Pathway access to countryside;
- Height and space, open vistas over green spaces;
- Open views;
- Mature trees;
- 'Natural' boundaries to properties;
- Lack of 'gated' properties;
- Slopes and Knowle as a hill top village.

Question 3: What are the key design elements, character or features that new housing development should include?



- Maximum two storey property;
- Adequate space for off-road parking;
- Better provision for cyclists, taking into consideration their safety;
- Routes for cyclists;
- Provision of space for wheelie bins;
- Cycle paths and walking pathways to countryside or linkages to Dorridge train station;
- Respect for existing trees, hedges and paths;

- Pavements wide enough for pushchairs;
- Green spaces;
- Positive integration of landscape features within new developments;
- Use of new strategic planting to create enclosure and a new clear settlement edge.

Workshop Site Analysis for Strategic Housing Site 8:

Specifically looking at the potential strategic housing site on Hampton Road this provided an opportunity for people to identify key design aspects, features or concerns about development on these sites.

What are the positive aspects we could use/include/enhance if this site was developed?

- Football club site, do not build on the cricket club site;
- Maintain football for Wychwood with current trees, hedges, pond etc;
- Established natural woodland and trees on the north-western boundary should be included as these are a valuable feature which should be retained;
- Don't want to see houses from the path;
- Grimshaw Hall doesn't need a green buffer in front. At present it is not visible from Hampton Road. The existing houses within Chantry Heath Crescent should have the benefit of open land to the rear;

- New 'corner' shops so as to partially reduce traffic flow/need for parking in the centre of Knowle.

What are the negative aspects we could use/include/enhance if this site was developed?

- This development would greatly increase the traffic trying to get onto Warwick Road at the junction just south of the roundabout giving access to Wychwood Avenue;
- Sports facility in Hampton Road will cause parking chaos. See old Silhillans on a Sunday morning in winter;
- Development on Hampton Road will cause extra traffic as it is beyond walking distance of Knowle. They will park on nearer roads and no car parking;
- Development of Thackers Nursery in Hampton Road will destroy the outlook from houses in Chantry Heath Crescent. As they are on elevated ground above the proposed site;
- All the development on one side of Knowle will cause traffic chaos in Warwick Road and High Street. Half the

development should be in Bentley Heath taking some flow to A34;

- Sports facilities to be located too far out of the village and with no practical access by public transport.

What would you change or include if this site was developed?

- Access to and from the development to the canal for leisure use;
- Preservation of streamside trust land;
- The traffic from this site and from the Arden Triangle more especially, will put huge traffic pressures through Knowle High Street and the preservation area. This must be greatly detrimental to an old and precious feature;
- Hampton Road, Warwick Road junction is already much too busy, needs resolution before any new houses are built on/by Hampton Road.



Workshop Site Analysis for Strategic Housing Site 9:

Specifically looking at the potential strategic housing site on Land South of Knowle this provided an opportunity for people to identify key design aspects, features or concerns about development on this site.

What are the positive aspects we could use/include/enhance if this site was developed?

- 30% increase in the size of Knowle will require 30% more school places required 30% more primary care/doctors surgery required, also transport and services infrastructure;
- Central hub for buses;
- Gardens that are small but well maintained for the lower cost houses;
- Cycle routes that are safe, joined up and don't just show lip service to the new government policies;
- Well lit and safe footpaths to Knowle centre to reduce car flow/use;

- Sports facilities available to the community as well as Arden Academy;
- To take into consideration those who cycle to school/work;
- Maintain all mature trees and hedgerows;
- Carefully consider access and infrastructure.

What are the negative aspects we could use/include/enhance if this site was developed?

- Traffic!
- Alternative transport linked up safe cycle lanes etc;
- Traffic congestion through Knowle High Street, other than bypass can not think of any mitigating solution;
- Traffic control along A4141 for proposed access to new Arden Academy, provide sufficient footpaths, cycle tracks, up Stripes Hill to cope with school traffic;
- Arden Triangle, No development in the green belt south of Knowle!;
- Excessive traffic on Warwick Road, Station Road and surrounding area;

- A massive increase in the number of cars (2-3 per household) in the villages;
- Lack of centre and community;
- No development on Arden Triangle a more dispersed selection of sites would be preferred.

What would you change or include if this site was developed?

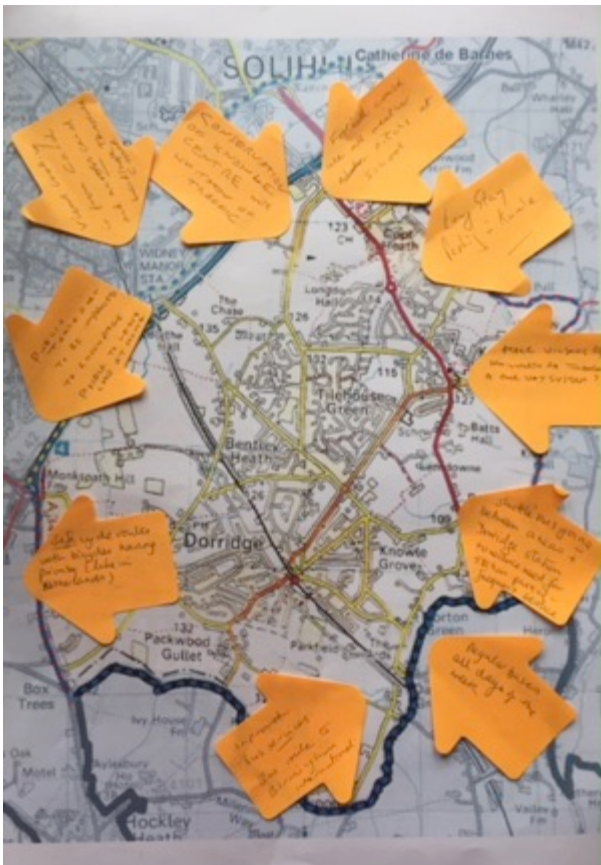
- Ensure parking for each household is within property boundary;
- Massively reduce the number of houses;
- Ensure adequate drainage;
- More parking at Dorridge Station;
- Green spaces to break up the development;
- Starter homes, houses suitable for the elderly and houses for those who have disabilities;
- No leaseholds;
- Density not more than 25 dwellings per hectare;
- Build as a '4th village' with a centre/heart;
- Central community areas that draws people centrally;

- Children's play ground/ green space;
- A few local shops;
- Bus stop for Dorridge, Slater, Solihull and Warwick;
- Similar to Bentley Heath- so fewer reasons to make journey to Knowle and Dorridge for smaller items;
- Builds community and good mental health for the population.



Transport and Connections:

This design task looked at the connectivity of the two proposed strategic housing sites and their wider context. People were asked to identify positive connections that if the two sites were developed they should have regards for. The image illustrates some of the listed points identified.



- Regular buses all days of the week;
- Shuttle bus going between areas and Dorridge Station to reduce need for station parking;
- Long Stay parking in Knowle;
- Conservation of Knowle centre with limitation of traffic;
- Make Wilsons Road/ Kenilworth Road triangle a one way system;
- Safe routes with bicycles having priority like in the Netherlands;
- Improve bus services, bus route to Birmingham International;
- Keep High Street two way flow, no bypass;
- Public transport to be improved to encourage people to leave the car at home;
- Egress from the Hampton Road sites should be via a new road alongside the canal to M42;
- More walking routes to the canal to make the best use of it;
- Car parking capacity for station, multi-storey;
- If Arden moves re-instate the bypass route;
- Travel to work via M42 in particular and train;

- Bus to Dorridge Station, Knowle and Birmingham International;
- Improved access to schools for pupils who get dropped off;
- Build the Knowle bypass on the original line east of the village.



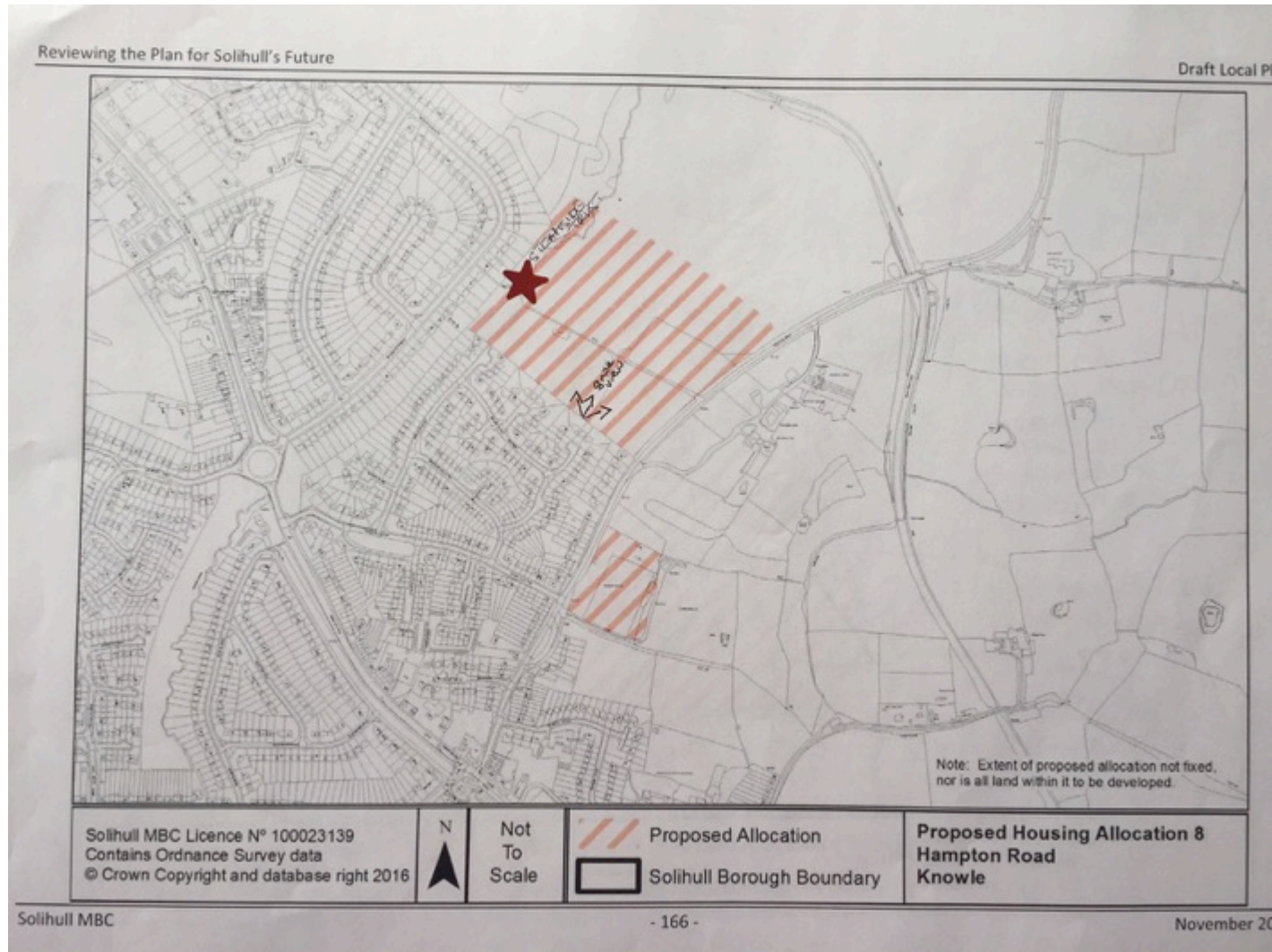
Views and Vistas:

In this design task people were asked to mark on plans of the two proposed strategic housing sites any key views or vistas that they thought should be considered, preserved or enhanced if future development took place on these sites.

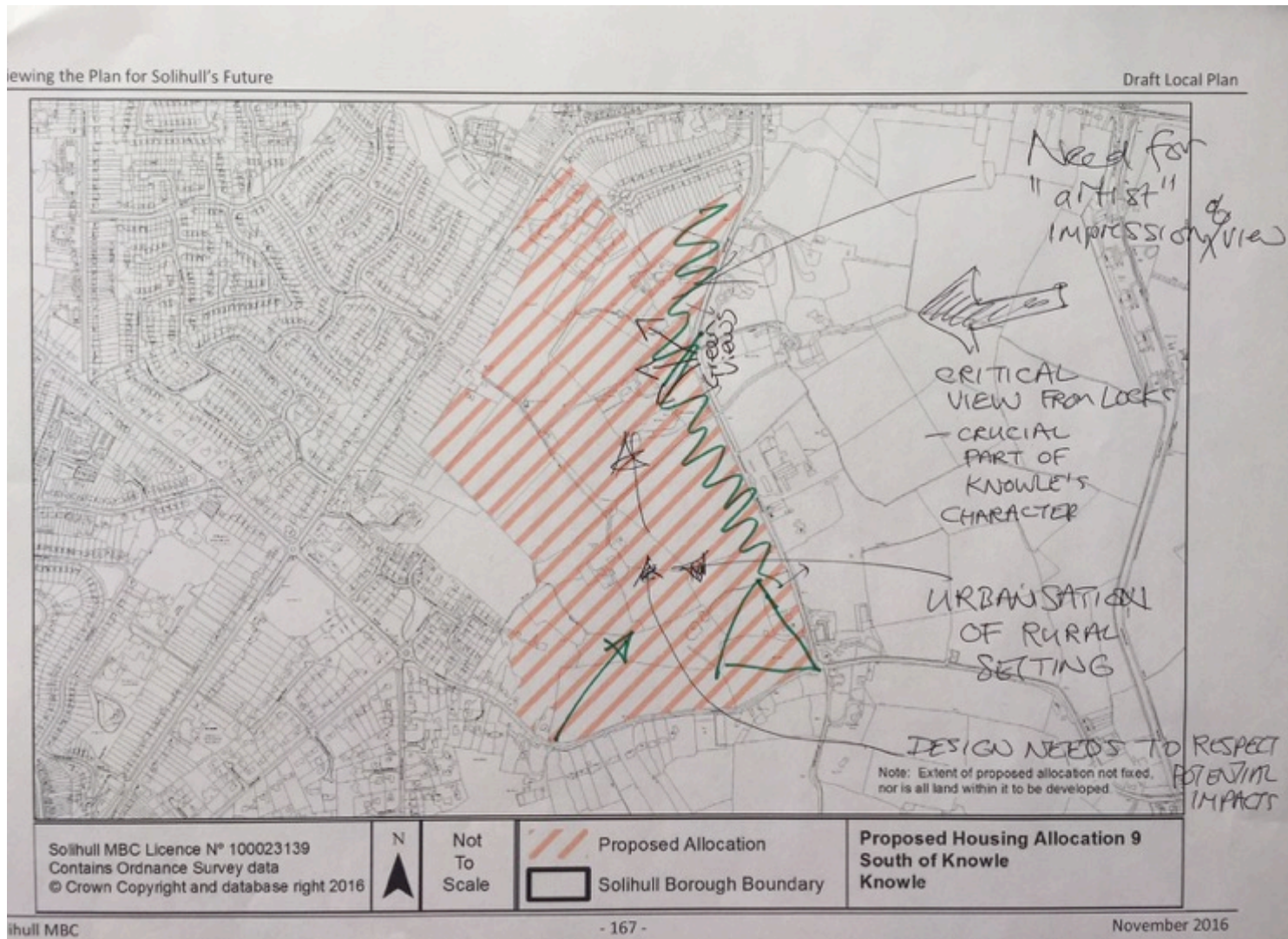
The suggested views and key vistas for each site are marked on the following two plans. Essentially on site 8 two key views were identified one from an established wooded area and the second from the rear of properties adjacent to the development.

On site 9 protecting views of natural areas across Warwick Road and careful consideration to views and setting at the lower end towards Rotton Row were highlighted. The plan also identified longer views across the site to ensure that the site does not appear overdeveloped and creating urban sprawl into the green belt.

Views and Vistas Plan Site 8:

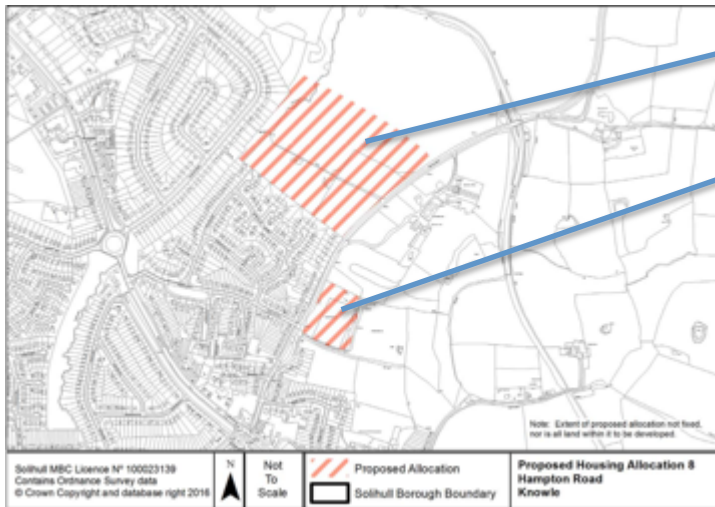


Views and Vistas Plan Site 9:



3.5 Site Analysis Strategic Site 8

This site forms one of the two current proposed strategic housing sites in the emerging Local Plan. Known as proposed housing allocation 8 Hampton Road, Knowle it is situated in the northern quarter of the neighbourhood area. This site is formed of 2 parcels of land, one currently occupied as a Football Club and the second parcel also set within the green belt is undeveloped.



(Pg 166, Reviewing the Plan for Solihull's Future, Draft Local Plan, November 2016)

Map of Strategic Site 8:








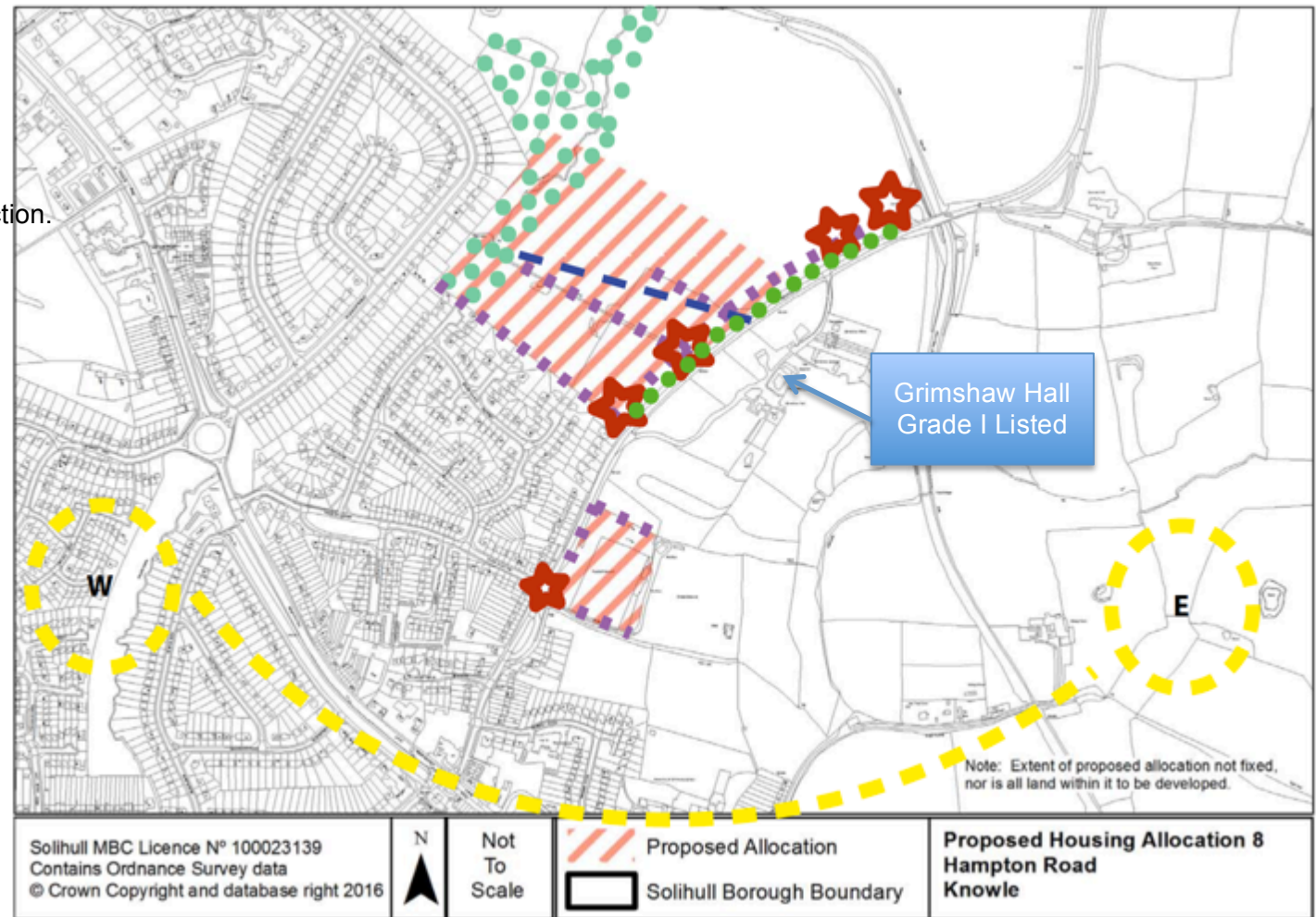
(Neighbourhood Plan Area Application, Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Forum September 2017)

Site Analysis Strategic Site 8

The plan illustrated here captures the findings from a site visit to understand the current site context and the wider character setting. In addition to this analysis further key factors have been identified in greater detail during this section.

Key:

-  Wooded Area
-  Existing vehicular access points
-  Grass Verge and informal footpath
-  Existing hedgerows (this only illustrates those visible from a public highway)
-  Overhead power lines



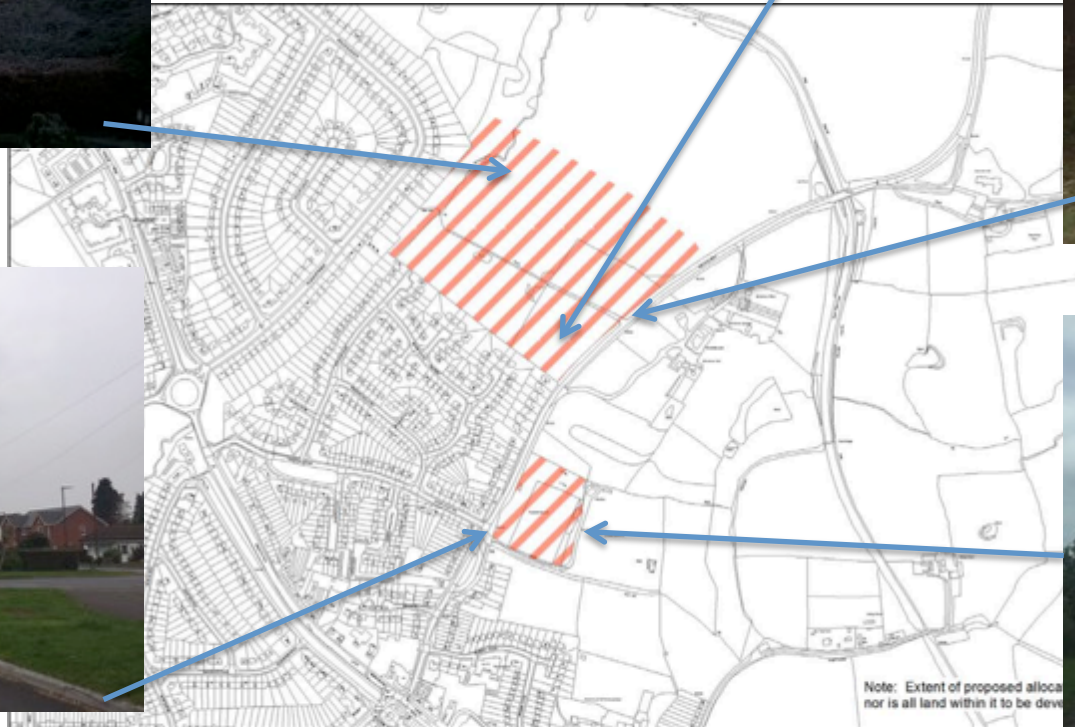
Site Analysis Strategic Site 8



(Image Credit, Mike Doble)



(Image Credit, Mike Doble)



Solihull MBC Licence N° 100023139 Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2016	N Not To Scale	Proposed Allocation Solihull Borough Boundary	Proposed Housing Allocation 8 Hampton Road Knowle
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(Pg 166, Reviewing the Plan for Solihull's Future, Draft Local Plan, November 2016)

Access and Connections

The northern site includes a mixture of informal footpaths through a wooded area that connects to the canal and formal designated footpaths accessed from Hampton Road. The site currently includes a field access and a small car park from Hampton Road adjacent to the canal.

The smaller site is also accessed directly from Hampton Road, located closer to Knowle village. The access includes clear visibility splays, street lighting and good pavements. A short distance down the road towards the larger site the nature of the highway changes from a village road with built form to a rural road. Currently the road is only partially lit, with mature vegetation on either side providing natural enclosure to the carriageway. There is currently no formal pavement, however on the northern side of the carriageway there is a wide verge that is used as an informal footpath.

Infrastructure

Currently there is no or limited infrastructure provision on the land on the northern site given its current land use as agriculture. Services are on the smaller site, serving the clubhouse and pitch.

Features for Retention

There are a number of established hedgerows bounding and dividing the larger site. These have been highlighted by the Neighbourhood Forum as assets that should be retained to preserve the rural character and serve as a natural boundary treatment in keeping with the character of fringe developments.

The larger site also includes a watercourse, mature woodland and a Local Nature Area. The smaller site is bound with some large mature trees and a manicured hedgerow onto Hampton Road. These should also be incorporated into future developments.

Key Views and Vistas

Larger Site: Currently the larger site is not fully accessible to the public. The opportunity would be to reinforce views and visual connections with the historic centre of Knowle on ground higher than the site and with the canal. (how can this be achieved with the historic centre?) A key aspect looking back towards the site from the canal would be to preserve the rural transition between any built form and the green belt. It is understood that Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council has also stated its expectation that there should be a visual buffer including hedgerows and mature planting along the road frontage opposite Grimshaw Hall to preserve its historic character and prevent any visual harm.

Smaller Site: A recent neighbouring development adjacent to the football club failed to maximise on views and visual connections to the open countryside, however it did retain hedgerows.

Any new development should consider visual connections to Knowle and the open countryside, these could be integrated framing views and providing legible developments (how??).

Other key views are to higher areas of land with substantial tree cover, which are located outside of the area.

Surrounding Context

This site is on the edge of the settlement of Knowle village. The smaller site is bound on the western side by Hampton Road, with detached and semi-detached properties set back from the road behind front gardens. The southern side is adjacent to a recent housing development which is high density but retains some important green infrastructure. The eastern and northern boundaries of the site are in Green Belt.

Natural Landscape

The natural landscape is an asset of the larger site in the north, including a Local Nature Site and watercourse, large mature wooded areas and mature established hedgerows. The site is also adjacent to the canal. There is also a small wooded area on the southern smaller site, which provides a natural buffer to the open countryside.

The Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment, produced by Waterman Infrastructure and Environment Limited for Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council in December 2016 sets out a number of key sensitivities and pressures facing the natural landscape in the Neighbourhood Area. These are comprehensively listed previously in this report. However there are a number that are directly applicable to this potential strategic housing site and should be fully considered when developing any future site brief or masterplans. The relevant points are listed below:

- *“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.

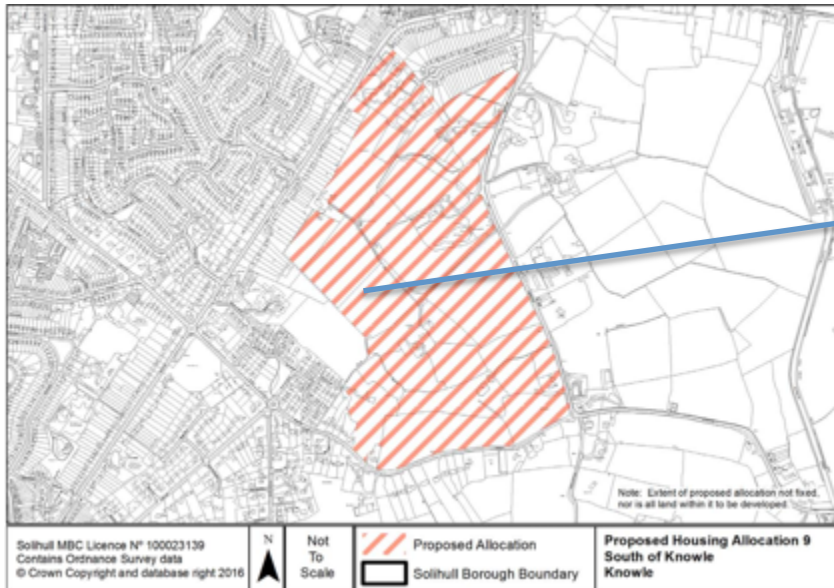
- *Limited footpath network close to urban edge places walkers on narrow and dangerous roads.”*

(Pg 27, Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment, Waterman Infrastructure and Environment Limited, December 2016)

Some of these points raised have been echoed in concerns raised during the design workshop, particularly with reference to encroaching into the open countryside, capacity of infrastructure to cope with the additional growth and the safety of pedestrians moving to and from these potential sites.

3.6 Site Analysis Strategic Site 9

This site forms the second of the two currently proposed strategic housing sites in the emerging Local Plan. It is referred to as proposed housing allocation 9 South of Knowle, also known as the Arden Triangle. This site is currently partially occupied by Arden Academy and lies entirely in the Green Belt.



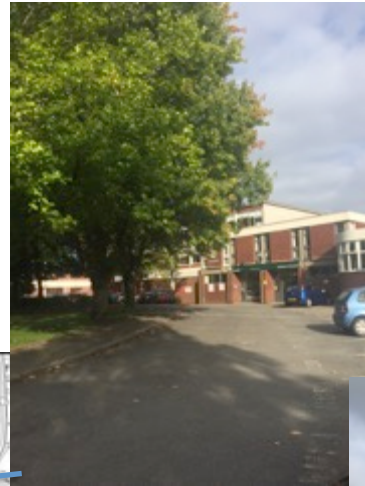
(Pg 167, Reviewing the Plan for Solihull’s Future, Draft Local Plan, November 2016)

Map of Strategic Site 9:



(Neighbourhood Plan Area Application, Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Forum September 2017)

Site Analysis Strategic Site 9



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Not To Scale



Proposed Allocation



Solihull Borough Boundary





Proposed Housing Allocation 9
South of Knowle
Knowle

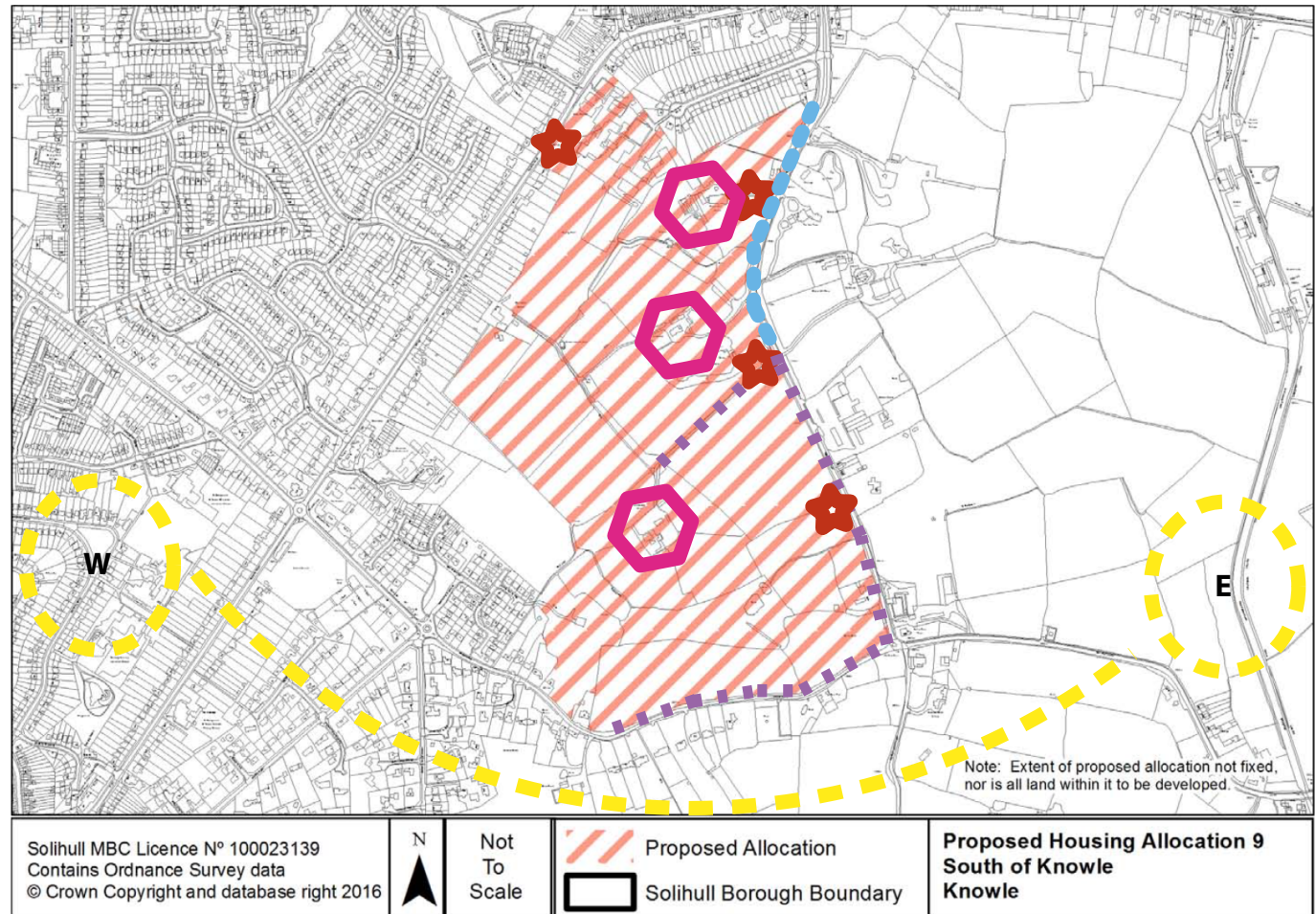
(Pg 167, Reviewing the Plan for Solihull's Future, Draft Local Plan, November 2016)

Site Analysis Strategic Site 9

The plan illustrated here captures the findings from a site visit to understand the current site context and the wider character setting. In addition to this analysis further key factors have been identified in greater detail.

Key:

-  Existing properties within the site
-  Vehicular access points
-  Post and rail boundary treatment
-  Existing hedgerows (this only illustrates those visible from a public highway)



Access and Connections

The site can be accessed from the north-west boundary from Station Road. Private access can also be made from Warwick Road to the east.

The site is also permeable with a public footpath and bridleway from Station Road linking to the eastern boundary off Warwick Road.

Pedestrian routes are on pavements on Station Road or through the network of footpaths permeating the site. There is currently a pavement on the east side of Warwick Road.

Infrastructure

Currently there is no or limited infrastructure provision on the land on the southern end of the site given its current land use of agriculture. Services are available at the northern end as they support the school and other residential properties in and adjoining the land.

Features for Retention

There are a number of established hedgerows bounding on the site, these again have been highlighted by the neighbourhood forum as assets that could be retained to preserve the rural character and serve as a natural boundary treatment in keeping with the rural character.

The site also includes some large mature tree belts that should be incorporated into future developments. The image below looking towards Rotton Row illustrates some of these features.



Key Views and Vistas

Established hedgerows and trees provide definition and natural features that could be used to inform vistas or create green spaces within the development. These are defensible boundaries that would preserve the rural character, as this site would form a substantial urban development in the green belt and would help to maintain a degree of visual separation from Rotton Row, a small cluster of dwellings separate from the urban areas.

Looking back towards the site from either Grove Road or Warwick Road it would be to preserve the rural transition between any built form and the green belt. Ensuring that any boundary treatments reflect the rural character.

Surrounding Context

The entire site lies within Green Belt. This site has two distinct parts; that on Station Road which is physically connected and close to the village centre; and the wider area, which is largely

open countryside and not part of the built form. The northern end of the site is set within the residential area and on the periphery of the other village services offered by Knowle. The northern part including Arden Academy feels very much connected to its community and built area. The larger part of this proposed site allocation extends further into the Green Belt and is also adjacent to a housing development currently under construction. The remainder is working agricultural land or parkland around Lansdowne House. The house is currently vacant and boarded up.

Natural Landscape

The natural landscape is the most significant element of this site given it comprises land predominantly used for agricultural purposes. Although a proportion of the site is currently in use as Arden Academy, that itself is set in managed grounds that includes places that could be suitable for Local Green Space designation and contribute to the natural character and landscape of the built areas.



Above is an image of the green space in front of Arden Academy School, which could be suitable for a Local Green Space designation.

The Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment, produced by Waterman Infrastructure and Environment Limited for Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council in December 2016 sets out during the study a number of key sensitivities and pressures facing the natural landscape in the Neighbourhood Area. These are comprehensively listed previously in this report,

however there are a number that are directly applicable to this potential strategic housing site and should be fully considered when developing any future site brief or masterplans.

The relevant points are listed below:

- *“Possible increased 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.*

- *Limited footpath network close to urban edge places, walkers on narrow and dangerous roads.”*

(Pg 27, Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment, Waterman Infrastructure and Environment Limited, December 2016)

Some of these points raised have been echoed in concerns raised during the design workshop, particularly with reference to encroaching into the open countryside, capacity of infrastructure to cope with the additional growth and the safety of pedestrians moving to and from these potential sites.



Section 4

4.1 Next Steps

Development Brief

The two proposed strategic housing sites provide an opportunity to further develop this work into a development brief for the land, informing further growth and expansion. The elements in 3.5 and 3.6 explored in this report could be tested through community engagement and additional work with stakeholders and landowners to produce a clear brief for the area should it come forward for development within the Neighbourhood Plan period. Section 4.3 specifically identifies some of the points to be considered either in future masterplans or in a development brief.

This would provide confidence and clarity not only for the community but also developers who may take the sites forward in the future ensuring that any significant development is sustainable, meets the needs of the existing and future communities and addresses some of the issues raised in this report.

Local Green Space Allocations

Through the site analysis and design workshop a number of potential local green spaces were identified. It is recommended that the Neighbourhood Plan consider whether to designate Local Green Spaces within the Neighbourhood Plan.

It may be necessary to undertake an audit of the spaces, which would also identify any need and possible justification. Further information on Local Green Space can be found at:

http://mycommunity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/NP_Green-Space_0217.pdf

Policy Drafting

When drafting policies for the neighbourhood plan consideration should be given to preparing policies that set clear and specific requirements for the development to meet. Policies should cover topics such as the design and context of new development providing a clear framework or set of criteria. Section 4.2 specifically identifies what policies should include in relation to

design. This could also be further enhanced by a development brief for strategic sites, as previously discussed.

The Heritage and Character Assessment could also be used to inform policies on character areas or materials that may be applied to the design policies or housing policies of the plan.

4.2 Translating Design Aspiration to Design Policy

When drafting general design policies for the Neighbourhood Plan consideration should be given to the following themes, which have emerged through the design workshop and analysis of the two proposed strategic housing sites. These could be incorporated into the draft policies of the Neighbourhood Plan:

- Look at maximising the enhancement of natural features and highlight and list those of significant importance, such as the wooded area and stream on site 8, and the canal, incorporating these into future development.

- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to link with existing waterways.
- Integrate design options in to residential development to address the concerns raised about flexible parking such as ensuring a range of parking is provided within the domestic curtilage of larger new homes. Policy should ensure legible streets that reflect the existing local character. Policy could also encourage new developments to provide a mix of adequate car-parking provision as an integral part of the layout, so that it does not dominate the street. Additionally where garages are proposed they should be of a suitable size to accommodate larger vehicles.
- Provide better linkages with the Canal and more generally with the existing footpath network.
- Improved linkages and to enhance pedestrian and cycle routes.

- Define the location and role of open space. Ensure a range of open space is provided for play, leisure and recreation. These could be included within a masterplan and designated as Local Green Spaces in the future.

A previous study of the heritage and character of the Neighbourhood Area identified six character areas. Although very different in many aspects some broader key design principles that were a common thread throughout were identified. These elements in the following list could be translated in to character or design policy for the Neighbourhood Plan or be used to inform any future masterplanning in the Neighbourhood Area:

- Building set back from the road in residential areas apart from in village centres.
- Wide roads, with tree-lined streets are a strong characteristic.
- Good quality public realm with well maintained streets and spaces.

- Street furniture including signage and lighting is predominantly set on green posts, which add to the non-urban character.
- Connectivity and Space: The character area is highly permeable with a variety of safe well-designed pedestrian routes, including natural surveillance, legible streets. There is limited integration of cycle routes, which are more prevalent in other character areas.
- Natural Landscaping: Natural boundary treatments and mature planted gardens are a distinct characteristic of the area. In more formal designed estates within the area mature trees and grassed areas provide green spaces and separation between developments.
- Predominantly residential properties have private front and rear gardens.
- Broad Materials Palette of Brick, Tile and Render with wood used for decoration.

Another policy area that the Neighbourhood Plan should consider relates to the movement and connectivity of the Neighbourhood Area in relation to the Proposed Strategic Housing Sites and wider context. As identified previously the Neighbourhood Area is interconnected predominantly by B roads and as raised during the design workshop the community are concerned about the impact of additional vehicles on these routes and the movement of vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

Specific policies could be drafted to mitigate concerns by developing a policy that highlights critical road junctions within the Neighbourhood Area such as at Hampton Road and require that any new development demonstrates how they mitigate against substantially increasing traffic and exacerbating issues in these locations. Furthermore the Neighbourhood Plan could also draft policies that encourage more sustainable methods of travel and promotes linking into the existing cycle network or footpath network, reducing car journeys for local travel.

4.3 Informing Masterplans

This section aims to provide a discussion tool to inform any master-planning prepared for the proposed two strategic site allocations and aims is to ensure that development is sustainable and appropriate to the rural environment. This section could be included in the non-planning part of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan so the Neighbourhood Forum can use the recommendations to inform future masterplans.

Given the importance of the sites and the need to avoid incremental and fragmented development, a comprehensive masterplan for each site should first be prepared, so that it can accompany planning applications. This ensures that, if the sites are developed incrementally, each scheme forms part of a wider design and landscape framework.

Design and Access Statements supporting future planning applications should set out how development proposals address the issues and themes in the Neighbourhood Plan and in the Concept Masterplans.

On reflection from the design workshop and site analysis the following broad principles have been identified for the proposed strategic housing sites that could inform a future masterplan and address the concerns and aspirations of the community.

Strategic Site 8, Hampton Road

Design Review

For a site of this importance, independent design review is essential, as described in Paragraph 62 of the NPPF. This is suggested at a relatively early and conceptual stage, and then to test detailed design proposals at a later stage.

Knowle Village

The historic village of Knowle is located to the west of the proposed strategic housing site, screened partially by more recent housing developments. Any future development should demonstrate how it could reflect and enhance the character of the area, respecting the setting and relationship to the neighbouring village.

Natural and Built Assets

The site and its context are sensitive in terms of nature conservation, wildlife and biodiversity. This is clearly not a site for intensive over-development. Any redevelopment should take the opportunity to enhance the adjacent woodland which is a local nature reserve, the canal and Knowle Conservation Area. Also the importance of hedgerows and retention of those on site is a key design aspect to be considered.

Any development must demonstrate how it preserves and enhances these characteristics and the wider character of Knowle as a semi-rural settlement.

Water in the Landscape

The use of water and its integration in the landscape is a significant feature of this site. Within the site there is a small stream and pond that could be linked to or an opportunity to create Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDs) that provide a natural landscape feature in an urban setting. Adjacent to the site is the canal and any development should seek to maximise opportunities to link the development to the waterway.

Key Views and Vistas

Currently the site is not fully publicly accessible. However, at the design workshop members of the community identified key views across the site framing the canal and wooded areas. People also talked about visual connections with the historic village of Knowle, which sits on higher land above the site. Framed views could be created through the urban form to ensure the visual connection is maintained between these features. This could be designed through street layout or open spaces that lead into these areas.

Footpaths and Connections

The site is located parallel to the canal. Any future development of this land should make direct connections providing new linkages to an established route. Any future development should also seek to enhance existing footpaths within the site and create new pedestrian routes to new services and community spaces developed and new connections to Knowle village.

Traffic

Before any development is considered, full assessment should be made of existing highway capacity and the collective impact

of development proposals for the site, together with all other approved development in the vicinity. The access into and from the site was raised as a concern and how the new development could mitigate existing traffic issues at the junction of Hampton Road into the main village settlement of Knowle.

Similarly, air quality should be given consideration, including the impacts of pollution on health and on the area's protected landscapes and habitats.

Housing Density

The emerging local plan policy P5 'provision of land for housing' makes clear that the density of new housing will seek to use the land efficiently whilst maintaining the local character and distinctiveness.

This is a major factor to consider in any future masterplan, ensuring development reflects the locality whilst being viable and positively contributing to the local housing need. The Neighbourhood Forum should use the housing density evidence base they have gathered to influence any future housing densities for the sites. The Neighbourhood Forum could also

include in the rationale to any design policies the housing density of the surrounding area.

Infrastructure

Currently there is no or limited infrastructure provision on the land given its current land use of agriculture.

Sustainable Construction

Design solutions that incorporate superior environmental performance will be welcomed in particular, in line with Paragraph 63 of the NPPF.

Strategic Site 9, South of Knowle

Design Review

For a site of this importance, independent design review is essential, as described in Paragraph 62 of the NPPF. This is suggested at a relatively early and conceptual stage, and then to test detailed design proposals at a later stage.

Knowle Village

The historic village of Knowle is located to the north of the proposed strategic housing site and the site would form an extension to the village settlement. Any future development should demonstrate how it could reflect and enhance the character of the area, respecting the setting and relationship to the nearby Conservation Area for Knowle.

Natural and Built Assets

The site and its context are sensitive in terms of nature wildlife and biodiversity. This site includes a number of natural assets and features that any redevelopment should take the opportunity to enhance. These include extensive tree belts that are on the boundaries of the site and small clusters of mature trees within the site. Similarly there are large established hedgerows that currently screen a recent housing development from the open countryside.

Recently part of the site fronting Warwick Road has been cleared. This emphasises the point of how important it is to protect these assets through specific policies in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Any development must demonstrate how it preserves and enhances these characteristics and the wider character of Knowle as a semi-rural settlement.

Key Views and Vistas

Currently the site is not fully publicly accessible. However, at the design workshop members of the community identified key views across the site looking towards Rotten Row and the tree belt as well as the entire boundary with Warwick Road, which is a defensible boundary to the open countryside.

Framed views could be created through development incorporating green spaces that safeguard the existing natural assets of the site. This could include retaining existing hedgerows providing a degree of separation and screening between phases as the site is developed that then contribute to wildlife corridors in the final design. Or perhaps using large mature trees as a focal point for creating a series of green spaces within the development. Which would help make the development more legible.

Footpaths and Connections

The site is partially accessible by an existing access to properties on the site and the network of footpaths. Any future development should seek to enhance existing footpaths within the site and create new pedestrian routes to new services and community spaces developed and new connections to Knowle village.

Traffic

Before any development is considered, full assessment should be made of existing highway capacity and the collective impact of development proposals for this site on the villages as a whole, together with all other approved development in the vicinity. Similarly, air quality should be given consideration, including the impacts of pollution on health and on the area's protected landscapes and habitats.

Housing Density

The emerging local plan policy P5 'provision of land for housing' makes clear that the density of new housing will seek to use the land efficiently whilst maintaining the local character and distinctiveness.

This is a major factor to consider in any future masterplan, again as mentioned for the other potential Strategic Housing site, the advice would be to ensure development reflects the locality whilst being viable and positively contributing to the local housing need. The Neighbourhood Forum should use the housing density evidence base they have gathered to influence any future housing densities for the sites. The Neighbourhood Forum could also include in the rationale to any design policies the housing density of the surrounding area.

Infrastructure

Currently there is limited infrastructure provision on the land with some residential and agricultural buildings on the southern end of the site. However the northern section of the site is within the existing village of Knowle and includes Arden Academy, which is well served with existing infrastructure.

Sustainable Construction

Design solutions that incorporate superior environmental performance will be welcomed in particular, in line with Paragraph 63 of the NPPF.

4.4 Other Recommendations

Community Direct Action

Many Neighbourhood Plans contain a non-statutory section where important non-planning issues are considered, and often provide the basis for community-led action. A next step could be to consider the potential of community-led development in order to provide community facilities identified as being important to local people. This could be in the form of provision of local facilities, or exemplar development that focuses strongly on design.

The Neighbourhood Plan could identify any deficiencies in facilities within the Neighbourhood Area and develop a policy that identifies where Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) could be used.

Potential Strategic Housing Allocations

The Neighbourhood Forum has made robust representations against the proposed scale of housing growth in its area to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council as the emerging Local Plan is being prepared. This report could be used to produce and submit further representations as the Draft Local Plan moves through future phases of consultation to ensure a joined-up approach to the growth agenda of the Neighbourhood Area.

Representations to Transport Providers

This could include identifying any deficiencies in the current transport infrastructure and approaching the public transport providers to discuss the viability of new services being introduced in to the area to be developed as the new housing development takes place.

4.5 List of Evidence and Sources

- Understanding Place: Character and Context in Local
- National Planning Policy Framework, Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2012
- National Character Area Profile: 97 Arden, Natural England, 2014
- Reviewing the Plan for Solihull's Future, Draft Local Plan, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, November 2016
- Solihull Local Plan, Shaping a Sustainable Future, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, December 2013
- Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment, Waterman Infrastructure and Environment Limited, December 2016
- Housing Density Mapping, Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Forum, 2017
- Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Heritage Character Assessment, Urban Vision Enterprise CIC, October 2017
- Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment, Waterman Infrastructure and Environment Limited, December 2016

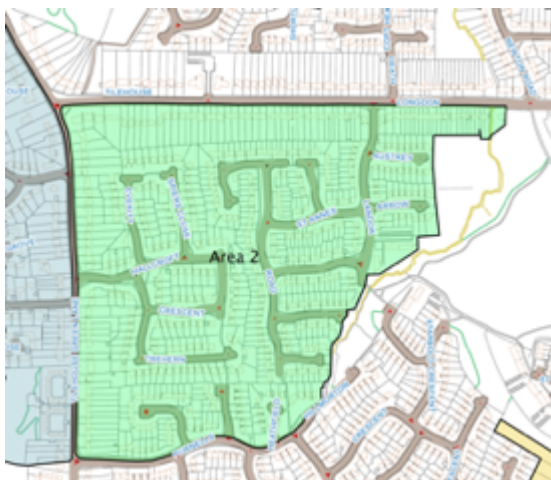
Appendix A: Detailed Maps of Housing Density Maps

Housing Density for 14 Areas based on OS Map and BLPU Address Points (2001 - 2015)								
12/12/17 18:11								
No. on map	Streets	Town	Typical Age of Property	No. of Properties	Non Dwelling Units	Dwelling Units (DUs)	Gross Area in hectares	Density – DUs / hectare
1	Wychwood Avenue/Broadfern Road/Holland Avenue	Knowle	1950	193	0	193	15.90	12.14
2	Longdon Road/Tilehouse Green Lane/Purnells Way	Knowle	1950/70	524	4	520	26.74	19.45
3	Milverton Road/Warwick Road/Station Road (from bus stop to Arden School)	Knowle	1930	116	15	101	6.18	16.34
4	Station Road (from Arden School to roundabout)	Knowle	Victorian to 1950	100	3	97	9.31	10.42
5	Middlefield Development	Knowle	2017	110	0	110	2.86	38.46
6	Tilehouse Green Lane/Browns Lane/Widney Road	Tilehouse Green	1980	465	4	461	30.37	15.18
7	Slater Road/Packwood Close/Hurst Green Road/Mill Lane	Bentley Heath	1950/60	451	5	446	19.15	23.29
8	Poplar Road/Hanbury Road/Edstone Close	Dorridge	1950/60	249	1	248	14.38	17.25
9	Glendon Way/Pembridge Road/Chadworth Avenue/Manor Road (to Conker Lane)	Dorridge	1990	355	2	353	20.63	17.11
10	Rodborough Road/Besbury Close/Woodchester Road	Dorridge	1950	202	0	202	18.82	10.73
11	Avenue Road/Knowle Wood Road/Dorridge Road	Dorridge	1930/50/70	183	0	183	22.39	8.17
12	Mill Lane/Buckminster/ Manton/Four Ashes	Dorridge	1930/50/70	295	1	294	12.13	24.24
13	St Johns/Lodge Rd/Station Rd	Knowle	Victorian/1950/60	146	4	142	3.72	38.20
14	Fennis Close/Copstone Drive/Station Road	Dorridge	1960/70	76	2	74	1.91	38.70

Area 1: Density/ ha 12.14



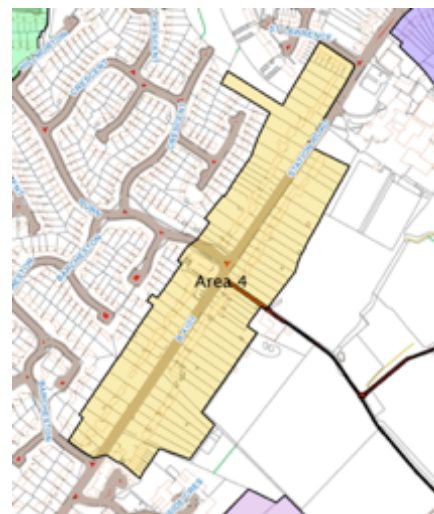
Area 2: Density/ ha 19.45



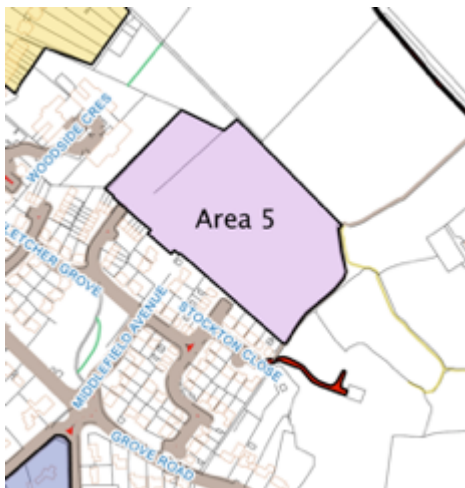
Area 3: Density/ ha 16.34



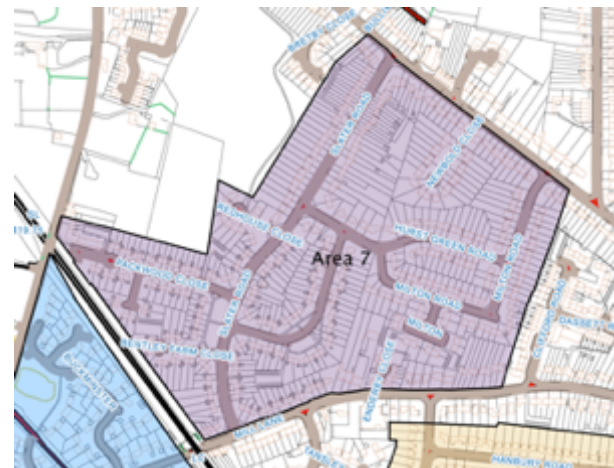
Area 4: Density/ ha 10.42



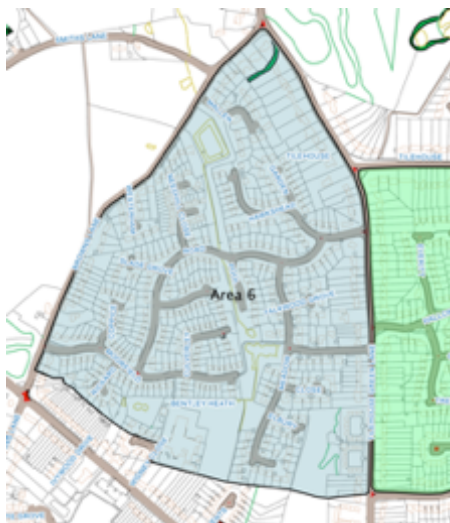
Area 5: Density/ ha 38.46



Area 7: Density/ ha 23.29



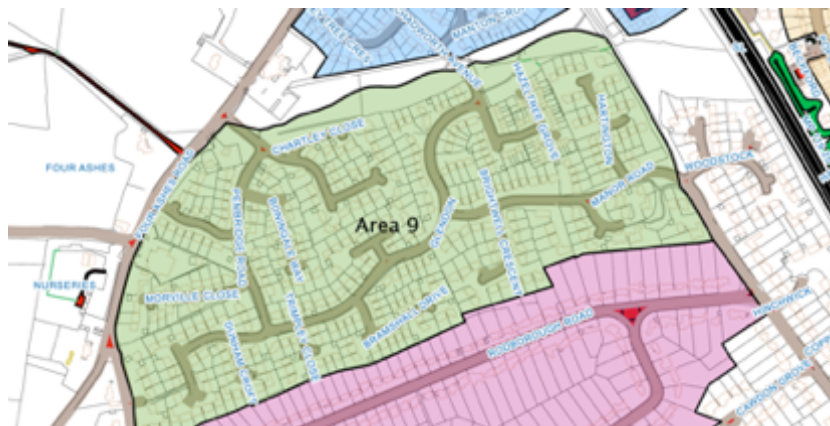
Area 6: Density/ ha 15.18



Area 8: Density/ ha 17.25



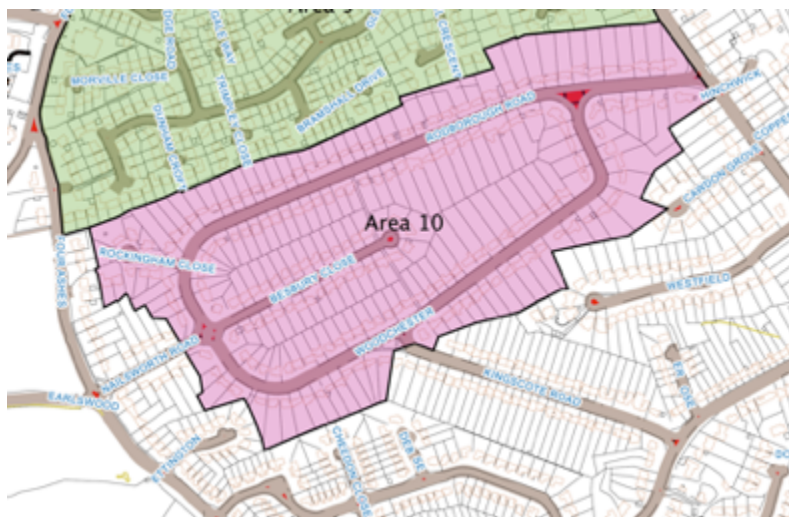
Area 9: Density/ ha 17.11



Area 11: Density/ ha 8.17



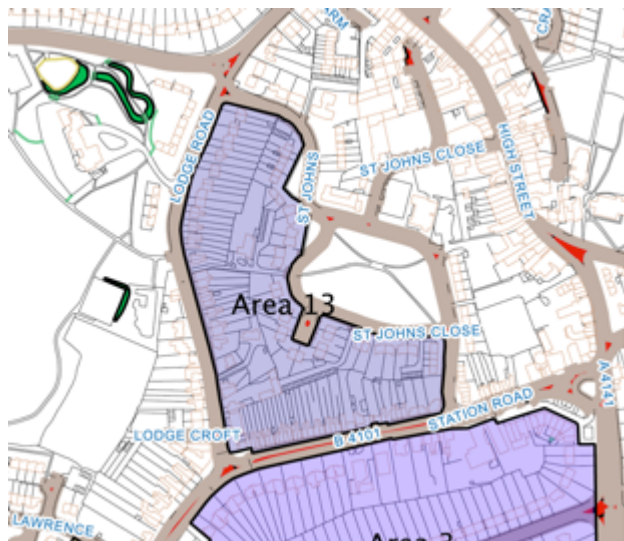
Area 10: Density/ ha 10.73



Area 12: Density/ ha 24.24



Area 13: Density/ ha 38.20



Area 14: Density/ ha 38.20





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