

# Solihull Local Plan Concept Masterplans

October 2020



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SMBC Conservation of the Historic Environment, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design and Ecology*

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## Executive Summary

The Local Plan supplementary housing allocations document seeks to provide over 5,300 dwellings on new sites to be allocated for development. This volume of concept masterplans has been published alongside the Local Plan Submission Draft .

This study has tested the capacity of sites for housing delivery. The illustrative masterplans were developed, with consideration of planning policy and best practice guidance. They are subject to change as further infrastructure survey work will need to be carried out at the application stage.

# 1. Introduction

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council is preparing a new local plan which sets out the vision and spatial strategy for the Borough up until 2036. The plan identifies sites for potential development, these sites are supported by a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA).

The Draft Local Plan which was consulted upon in December 2016 identified 20 potential allocations to deliver the Borough's housing needs. Site 19, The HS2 Interchange, has been excluded from this study as it is part of The HUB, an area within close proximity to the NEC, Airport and the future High Speed 2 Interchange and is part of a design process which is being managed by the Urban Growth Company. Site 20 is also excluded from this study as it relates to an employment allocation whereas this study is focussing on residential sites. More advanced work has been undertaken for the sites included in the previous Draft Local Plan consultations in 2016 and 2019.

The purpose of the study is to demonstrate that the sites allocated in the Local Plan can deliver the Council's housing needs, for the plan period.

In order to establish robustness and deliverability of the proposed allocations, a concept masterplan for each of the site allocations in the Local Plan has been developed.

The Masterplan approach is born out of the Council's ambition to accommodate growth with place-making providing the central theme. The illustrative concept masterplans are therefore intended to demonstrate how sites could be brought forward for development in a form which both seek to respond to the Borough's needs and safeguards the long term desirability of Solihull Borough as a place to live and work.

Each concept masterplan sets out at a broad level how the sites ought to be developed and the likely housing capacity. The concept plans have been developed in collaboration with the site owners and/or promoters.

Once allocated in the Local Plan all sites will need to be brought forward in a manner which reflects both national and local plan policies. This will require additional survey work which is current at the time of application. This may result some changes to the illustrative masterplans.

# Methodology

## Local Plan site allocations: Concept Masterplans

The masterplan process for this study is outlined in Figure 1.

The diagram reflects the stages of developing masterplans recommended by The Design Council which is the UK Government advisor on design. Their advisory services includes The Commission for the Built Environment (CABE) which advocates the principles for developing sites set out in the 2006 CABE publication *Design and Access Statements; How to read and write them*. This suggests a four-stage approach: Assessment, Involvement, Evaluation and Design.

These stages are reflected in the methodology outlined, however due to the complexity of the sites and the need to engage and involve stakeholders throughout the process, the stages are more iterative reflecting the level of review of the illustrative masterplans.

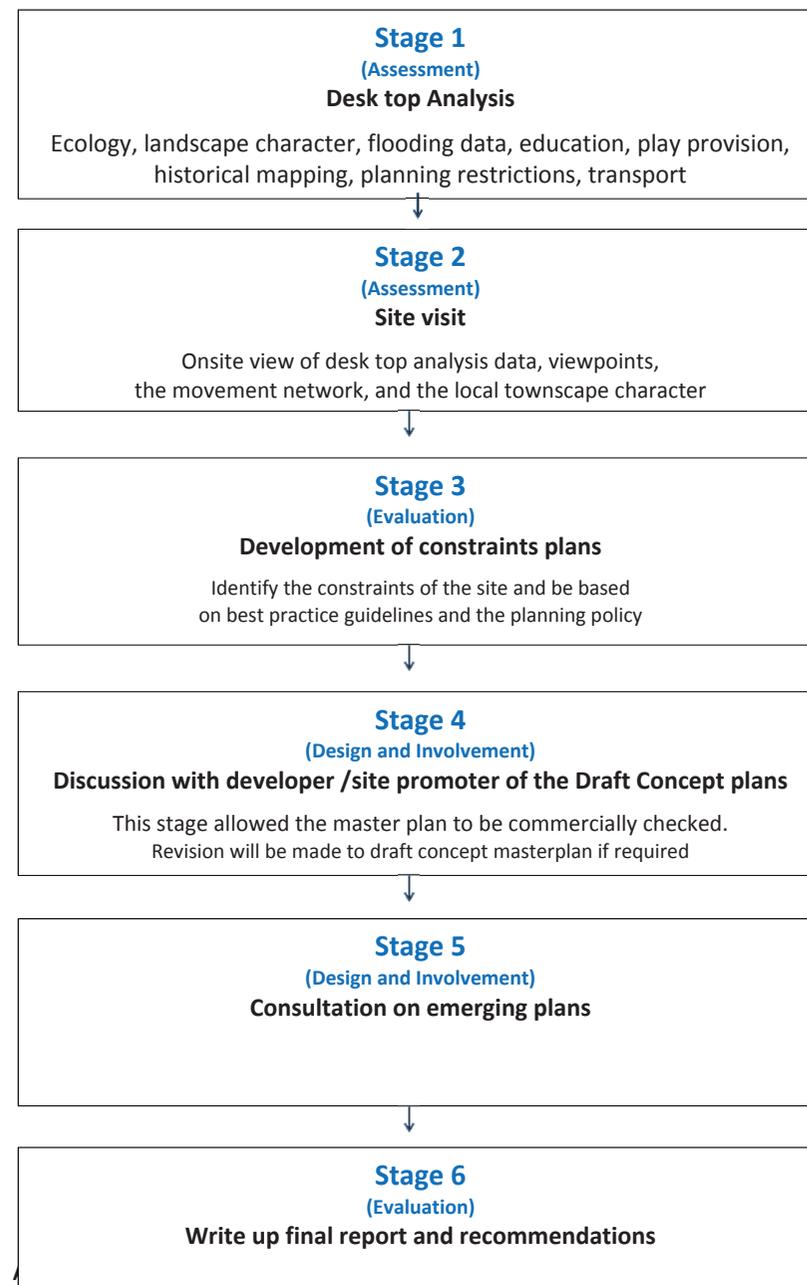


Figure 1, Methodology

## Stage 1: Assessment

In order to demonstrate robustness to the concept masterplans a review of the existing and emerging evidence for each of the sites has been carried out.

The 2018 Greater Birmingham HMA Strategic Growth Study reviewed the Boroughs housing density. This study indicated that the Housing Densities achieved since 1996 had not delivered over 39 dph as shown in Figure 2 . This is a reflection of the largely suburban characteristics of the Borough and the market demand for family housing above apartments. The 2016 Solihull Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment also highlighted that the average density for the Borough was 36dph. The findings from both these reports together with the ambition to ensure development reflects the Boroughs character and responds to site context has influenced how the housing capacity of each sites has been optimised.

This considered approach suggests that the medium density considered across the sites is 36dph, high density development is therefore anything above 40+ dph and is suggested in those areas along transport corridors and in more urban locations in the Borough where apartment living is likely to reflect market demand. The low density areas of housing are in particular response to those sites which have landscape, ecological and historic buildings to help safeguard their setting in these locations 30 dph

has been suggested. These proposed densities are considered achievable and therefore are a realistic indicator of the capacity of the housing sites and therefore the Councils ability to deliver its housing numbers across the selected sites.

Figure 3 sets out the key documents which were reviewed during the desktop analysis of the sites.

In addition to these studies a review of data and concept masterplans submitted by the promoters /and land owners of the sites was undertaken.

**Table 30: Densities of Development Built**

| LPA                        | Dwellings per hectare |           |           |           |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|                            | 1996-1999             | 2000-2003 | 2004-2007 | 2008-2011 |
| <b>Birmingham</b>          | 37                    | 46        | 82        | 67        |
| <b>Bromsgrove</b>          | 19                    | 22        | 31        | 28        |
| <b>Cannock Chase</b>       | 31                    | 25        | 41        | 43        |
| <b>Dudley</b>              | 29                    | 34        | 42        | 50        |
| <b>Lichfield</b>           | 24                    | 23        | 30        | 33        |
| <b>North Warwickshire</b>  | 25                    | 26        | 39        | 27        |
| <b>Redditch</b>            | 29                    | 30        | 55        | 45        |
| <b>Sandwell</b>            | 36                    | 40        | 55        | 52        |
| <b>Solihull</b>            | 26                    | 26        | 39        | 36        |
| <b>South Staffordshire</b> | 22                    | 17        | 27        | 25        |
| <b>Stratford-on-Avon</b>   | 22                    | 26        | 33        | 21        |
| <b>Tamworth</b>            | 27                    | 33        | 45        | 46        |
| <b>Walsall</b>             | 28                    | 36        | 49        | 48        |
| <b>Wolverhampton</b>       | 29                    | 41        | 47        | 43        |
| <b>HMA Average</b>         | <b>27</b>             | <b>30</b> | <b>44</b> | <b>40</b> |

Source: CLG Live Table P232

Figure 2, Housing Density Greater Birmingham HMA Strategic Growth Study February 2018 Greater Birmingham

## Stage 2: Site Visits

The site visits reviewed the desk top findings and evaluated the site context in order to set the urban design framework for the development of the site. This framework considered: neighbouring building heights, viewpoints, the movement network and local townscape character

In the interest of comprehensive development some of the sites have been looked at collectively in order to establish their cumulative impact on transport and green infrastructure for example.

|                     | <b>Desk Top Analysis</b>  |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Ecology</b>      | Review of statutory designation of sites (SSSI and LNR) and non-statutory sites (LWS, PLWS, LGS)<br>Protected/ Notable species records (WBRC)<br>Phase 1, Habitat Data (HBA) – Distinctiveness Connectivity.  |
| <b>Heritage</b>     | Historic England Best Practice Guides including setting<br>Historic environments record<br>National Heritage List<br>SMBC Local List  |
| <b>Landscape</b>    | TPOs<br>Landscape features – trees, hedgerows, field ponds etc.<br>Landscape character – Arden Landscape / Waterman’s LCA<br>PRoWs<br>Sensitivity to change – Landscape Character Assessment by Waterman<br>Landscape assets<br>Soil maps and agricultural land classification<br>Topography<br>Views<br>POS / ANGSt standards / Play & sport provision<br>Public rights of way                         |
| <b>Urban Design</b> | CABE- <i>Design and Access Statements How to read and write them:</i><br>SMBC Characterisation Study<br>Urban Design Compendium<br>National Design Guide: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful place.<br>Neighbourhood Plans<br>Greater Birmingham HMA Strategic Growth Study February 2018<br>Solihull strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment 2016 |

Figure 3 Desktop Analysis

**Stage 3: Evaluation**

Prior to meeting with site owners and promoters a constraints plan was developed. This plan was based on best practice guidelines and planning policy with input from the multi-discipline expertise across the Council. This allowed the Council to have a baseline and starting point for discussions.

**Stage 4: Design and Involvement**

Initial meetings were had with site and land promoters. These meetings primarily identified whether there was a consensus between land owners of a site about bringing the site forward for development and whether there would be a project lead if the site was in multiple ownership. Where site promoters had gone as far as producing concept masterplans these were discussed in their broadest sense, with Council officers recommending parts of the site which may need to be revisited, for example where there was an impact on heritage or ecology.

Following discussion and feedback from these meetings draft illustrative masterplans were developed these were then circulated to site promoters. These initial plans provided the focus for subsequent meetings with site promoters. This stage allowed the masterplan to be commercially checked. This was a key consideration to whether the site would be viable and importantly whether it could deliver the Council's housing needs in a form that was compliant with planning policy and best practice guidance.

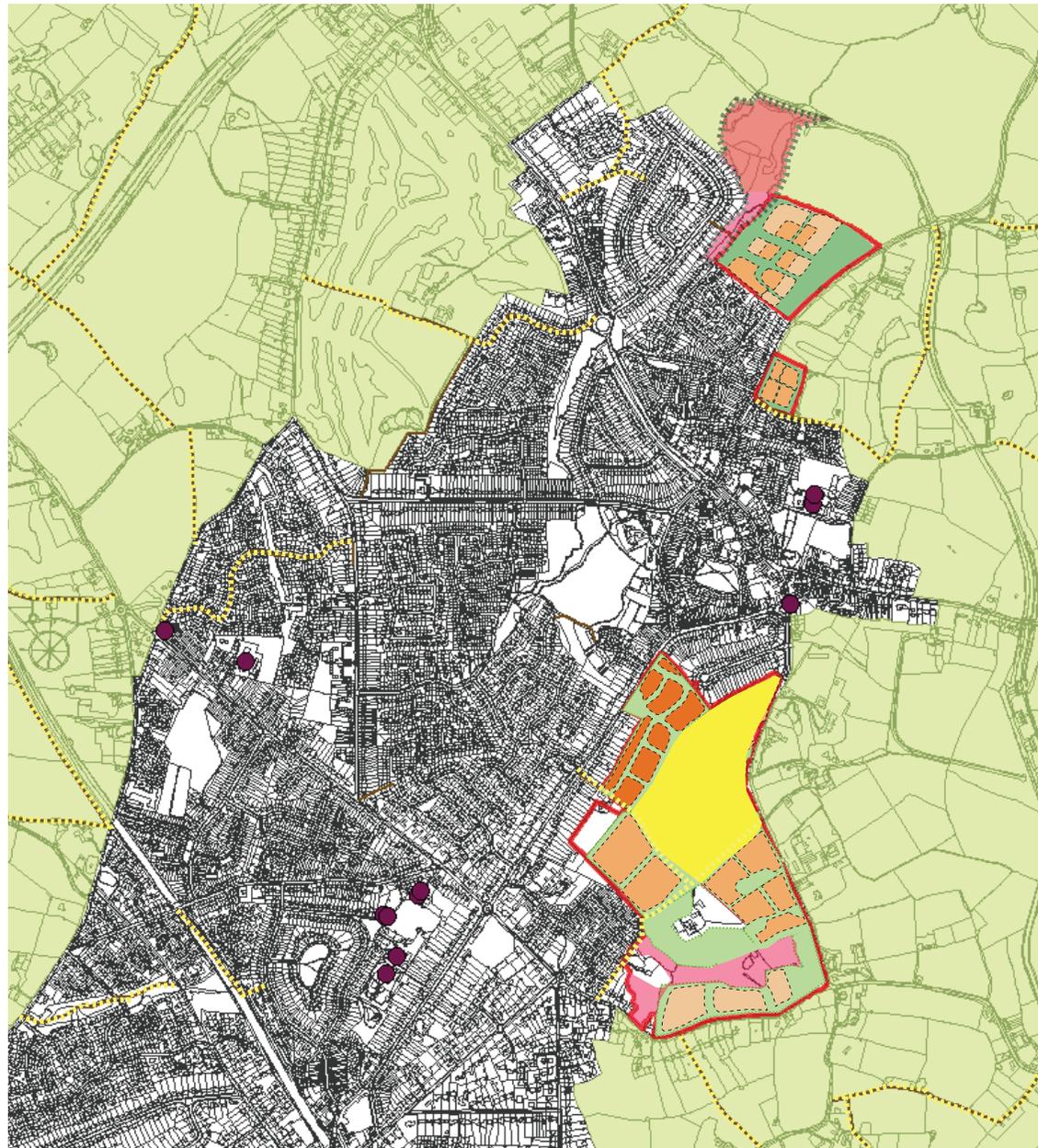
**Stage 5: Community Design and Involvement**

Some emerging plans were shared on an informal basis with Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Forums. Formal comments were requested as part of the January 2019 Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation. A summary of the responses was published in July 2019 (<https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Planning/LPR/Draft-Local-Plan-Supplementary-Consultation-Summary-of-Representations.pdf>) The Concept masterplans were then reviewed having regard to these comments alongside additional heritage assessment and review of the playing pitch strategy, SFRA Flood Risk Assessment and highways capacity study.

Details of each of the sites include:

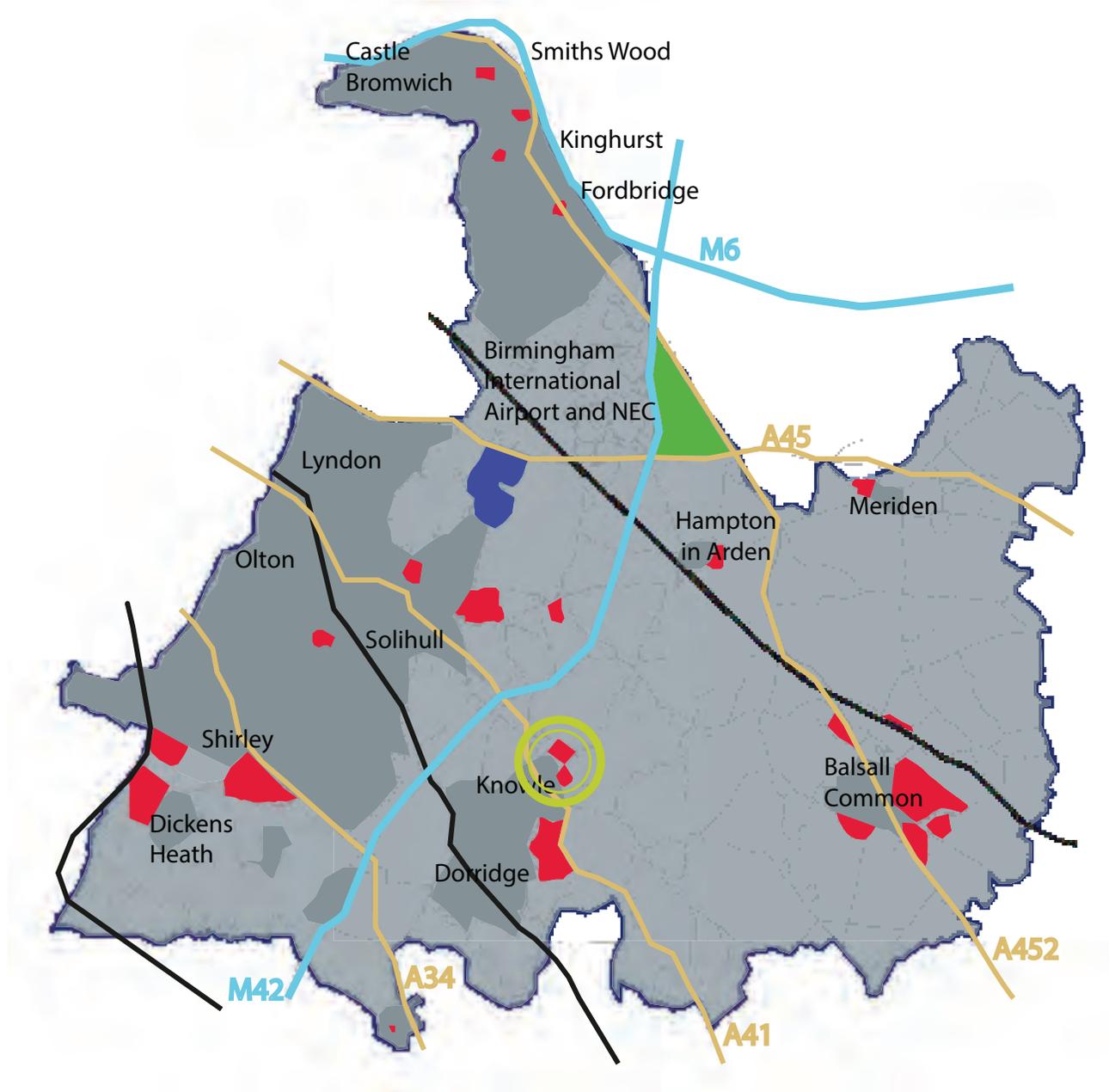
- Site location
- Site area and context with images
- Site constraints and opportunities
- A summary of the discussion with land promoters and details of how the layout and design response has changed at each stage
- Concept layout, including heights, density, open space provision, access, and commercial opportunities. The average density has been calculated at 36dph for the Borough ( Solihull Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment 2016). This study has assumed low density to be 30 dph and less and 31-40 dph as medium density and high density above 40dph .
- Evaluation of the deliverability of the site this can be found in the reports conclusion.

# Knowle Dorridge Bentley Heath Spatial Diagram



- Green belt
- Footpath
- Site allocations
- Exiting public open space
- Exiting educational facilities
- Proposed public open space
- Local Wildlife Site or area of ecological value
- Relocated Arden academy and 2 form primary school and nursery.

# KN1: Hampton Road, Knowle



# Site Analysis



The Hampton Road site comprises of two parcels of land which total 13 ha. The 2016 Draft Local Plan proposed 300 homes across the two parcels subject to a heritage assessments.

KN1 is located just under one kilometre from the centre of Knowle and its services. The northern parcel lies adjacent to a 2-storey 1960s housing development which backs onto the site.

The southern parcel lies to the north of a recently completed housing development and is currently home to the Knowle Football Club. The allocation is made on the basis that the sports facilities and clubhouse are no longer fit for purpose and require substantial refurbishment.

A portion of the northern site incorporates the Local Wildlife Site Purnell's Brook and Woodland.

The setting of the Grade 1 listed Grimshaw Hall opposite the site to its east must be carefully considered and preserved. Development should avoid encroaching upon the setting, and if it does so, exceptional design and quality together with full regard for context would be necessary and expected.

Development must also have regard to potential flood risk areas.

- |   |  |   |                   |
|---|--|---|-------------------|
|  | Fronts of properties                                       |  | LWS               |
|  | Back of properties   |  | Pond              |
|  | Listed building/Heritage asset                             |  | Hedgerow          |
|  | Zone of significance on the setting of the listed building |  | Footpaths         |
|  | Area with potential flood risk                             |  | Grand Union Canal |
|   |  |  | Trees             |



# Savills Architects Site Proposal



At an initial meeting held with the site promoters Savills in 2016, highlighted how the area of land to the north of the site could be developed as a sports hub. The promoters plan suggests additional housing to help facilitate the sports hub and have located the Public Open Space where it helps to provide separation from Grimshall Hall.

The Council acknowledged the amount of consideration given to the design approach however suggested there was a need to check off-set distances along Purnell's Brook and the LWS. A request was made for more detailed information to inform the deliverability of the sports pitches and the likely impact of this given the significant level changes across the site and the likely ecological impact on Purnell's Brook and the Canal. The visual impact of the sports facilities and the impact on the setting of the listed building was also raised.

Discussion with the site promoters and land owners have been ongoing since 2016. The manager of the football club has raised his preference for security fencing around the sports pitches, however, Officers at the Council raised their concerns about the impact this would have on the Green Belt and character of the development.

Following the findings from the independent Heritage Assessment commissioned by the Council the Master-plan has been reviewed. Whilst the site promoter is broadly in support of the Councils emerging illustrative plan, they believed there is scope to bring development closer to Grade 1 listed Grimshaw Hall. This discussion is only likely to be resolved at the application stage. The significance of the impact of development on the setting of Grimshaw Hall can only be fully determined once a full planning application has been submitted.

# SMBC Illustrative Concept Masterplan: KN1: Hampton Road



The concept masterplan illustrates how 180 homes can be accommodated on the site. This can be achieved by relocating the current sports provision within the Green Belt. Very special circumstances will need to be demonstrated and the construction, design, lighting and layout of the pitches, together with the buildings and parking provision will need to respect the landscape setting and ecological value of the site. A road along the northern perimeter of the site will provide the new Green Belt boundary whilst the Grand Union Canal will provide a physical barrier to the area which provides opportunities for sports recreational facilities.

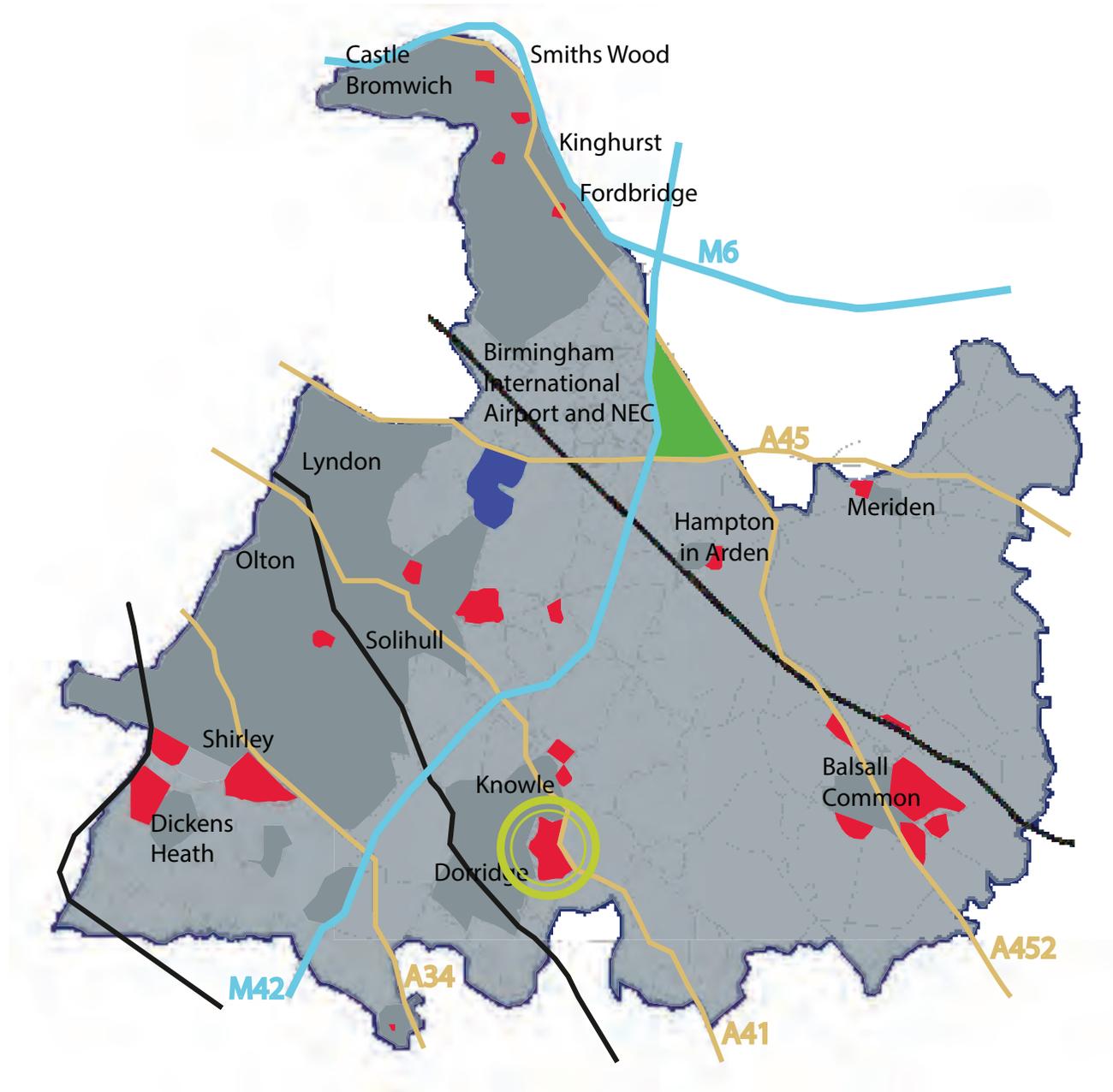
The density of the housing ranges from 30–40 dph, reducing toward Grimshaw Hall and the edge of the Green Belt where views of the countryside are maximised. The layout promotes perimeter block development to maximise natural surveillance and encourage active streets. Pedestrian and cycling connectivity towards Knowle local centre and the Grand Union canal tow path are encouraged to promote health and well-being.

An integrated drainage, landscape and ecological strategy should be developed for the site. The site should utilise opportunities to maximise green/blue infrastructure and include linear conveyance SuDS in green routes and optimise layouts to ensure extreme flood flow paths are not impeded. Based on 180 dwellings the public open space requirement on the site is 1.4 ha. The provision of formal play features will need to be sympathetic to the historic setting of Grimshaw Hall. Likewise the trees and hedgerows along Hampton Road must be retained to ensure the character of this approach into Knowle is conserved.

Harm to the setting of the Grade 1 listed Grimshaw Hall should be avoided. Only if harm cannot be avoided should mitigation be considered, and then it should be fully justified and demonstrated to be successful in reducing harm.



# KN2: South of Knowle



# Site Analysis

The 49 ha site is currently within the Green Belt. If the site is allocated for development, Warwick Road and Grove Road will form the new Green Belt boundaries. The 2016 Draft Local Plan suggested an indicative capacity of 750 new dwellings for this site.

Current land uses include the Arden Academy buildings and playing fields, a garden on the western boundary used by the charity MIND, and several large residential properties (Stripes Hill House, Lansdowne House, Lansdowne Farm house and paddocks). There is marshy grasslands around Cuttle Brook some of which is designated as a Local Wildlife Site and several arable fields in the southern and south eastern parts of the site. The listed Rotten Row Farm and Grove Farm east barn lie adjacent to the site therefore the site forms part of their setting. Development should avoid encroaching upon their setting, and if it does so, exceptional design and quality together with full regard for context would be necessary and expected.

The site's topography is varied; there is an overall fall to the south east. The site contains a number of low-lying areas around its main water bodies, such as the Cuttlebrook stream and ponds, and the former boat lake in the grounds of Lansdowne House.

Likewise development must have regard to potential flood risk areas.





# Developer Proposals and Engagement

Arden Masterplanning



**Housing Schedule**

Area A: Land owned by SMBC

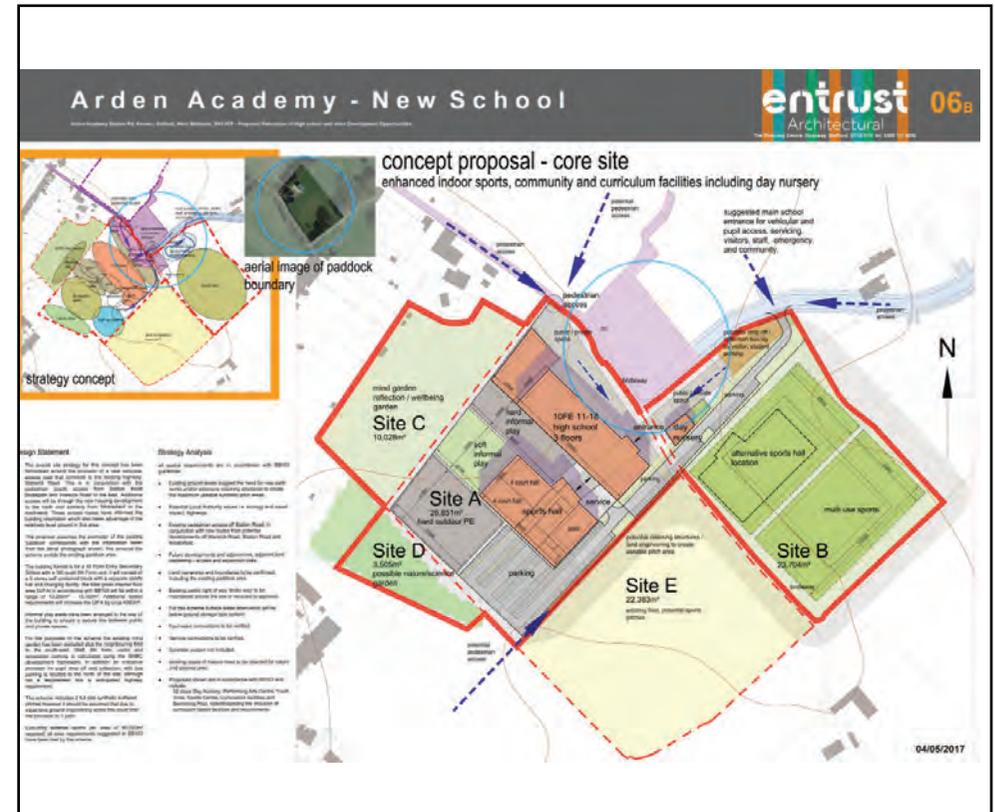
| Type                      | Quantity |
|---------------------------|----------|
| <i>Affordable/private</i> |          |
| 1 bed 2 person apartment  | 70       |
| 2 bed 4 person apartment  | 120      |
| 3 bed 5 person house      | 170      |
| 4 bed 7 person house      | 60       |
| <i>Affordable/rent</i>    |          |
| 2 bed 4 person apartment  | 20       |
| 3 bed 5 person house      | 20       |

Area B: Land owned by Mr V Goswami

| Type                      | Quantity |
|---------------------------|----------|
| 1 bed 2 person apartments | 24       |
| 2 bed 4 person apartments | 24       |
| 4 bed 7 person house      | 140      |

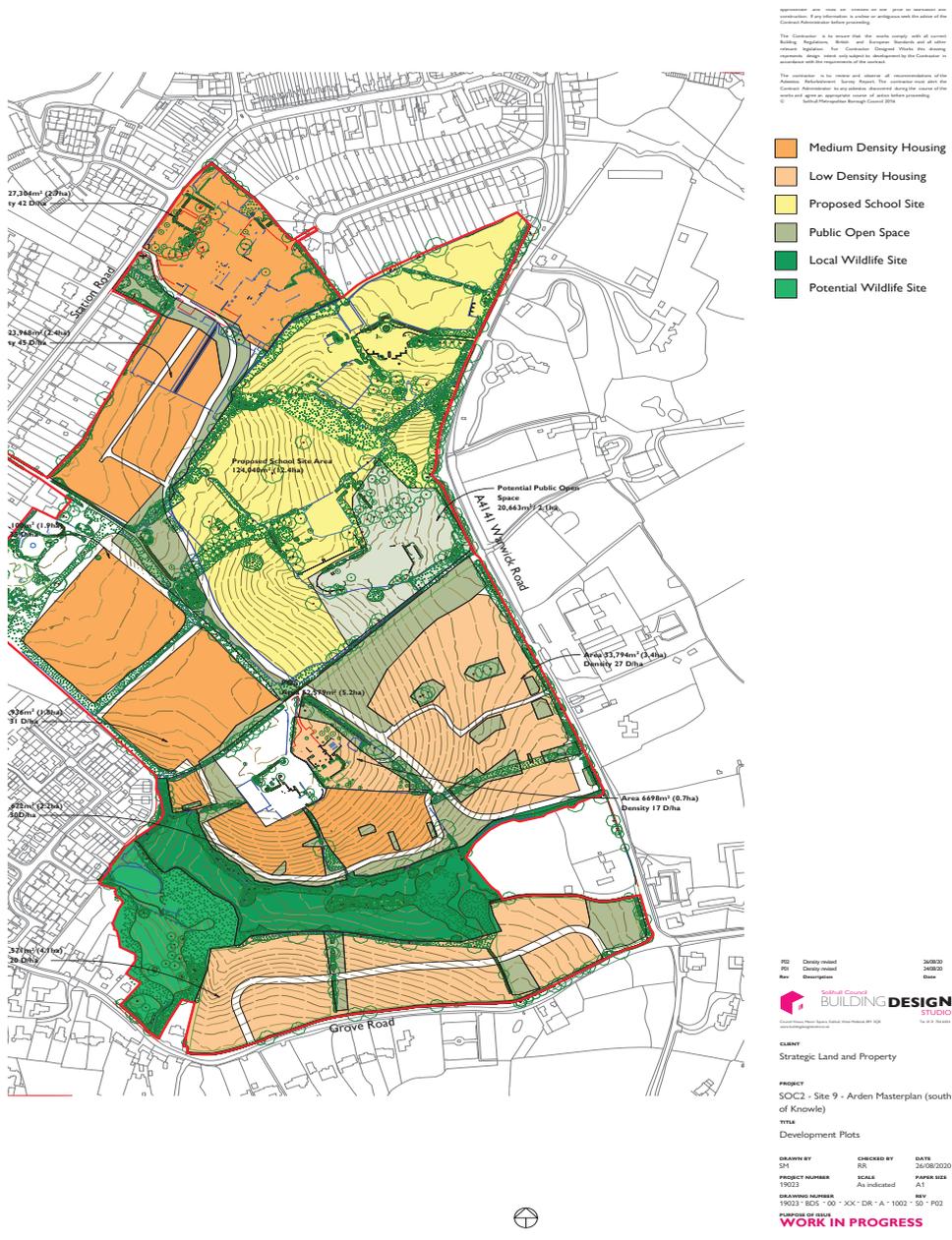


*Capita proposal for Arden Academy (SMBC land) and Lansdowne house and grounds parts of allocation site:*



- Above: plan for relocated Arden Academy as shown in call-for-sites submission on SMBC land and parts of Lansdowne Farm and Lansdowne House estates, November 2015
- Left: Capita Proposal for redevelopment of existing SMBC owned Arden Academy site and the adjacent Lansdowne Estate, date June 2017

# BDG Illustrative Concept Masterplan



## Building Design Group 2020 proposal

Officers have raised concerns about the level of provision of public open space and the need to retain hedgerows and trees across the site. The site promoters have been encouraged to maximise permeability through the site from the existing school catchment area on Station Road. Careful design of the perimeter of the school must be considered in order not to create a visual barrier in the site.

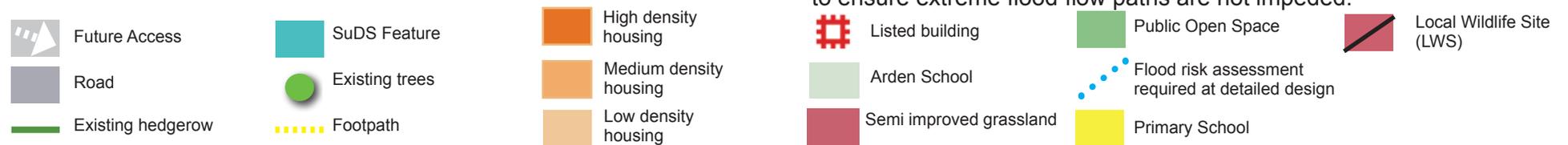
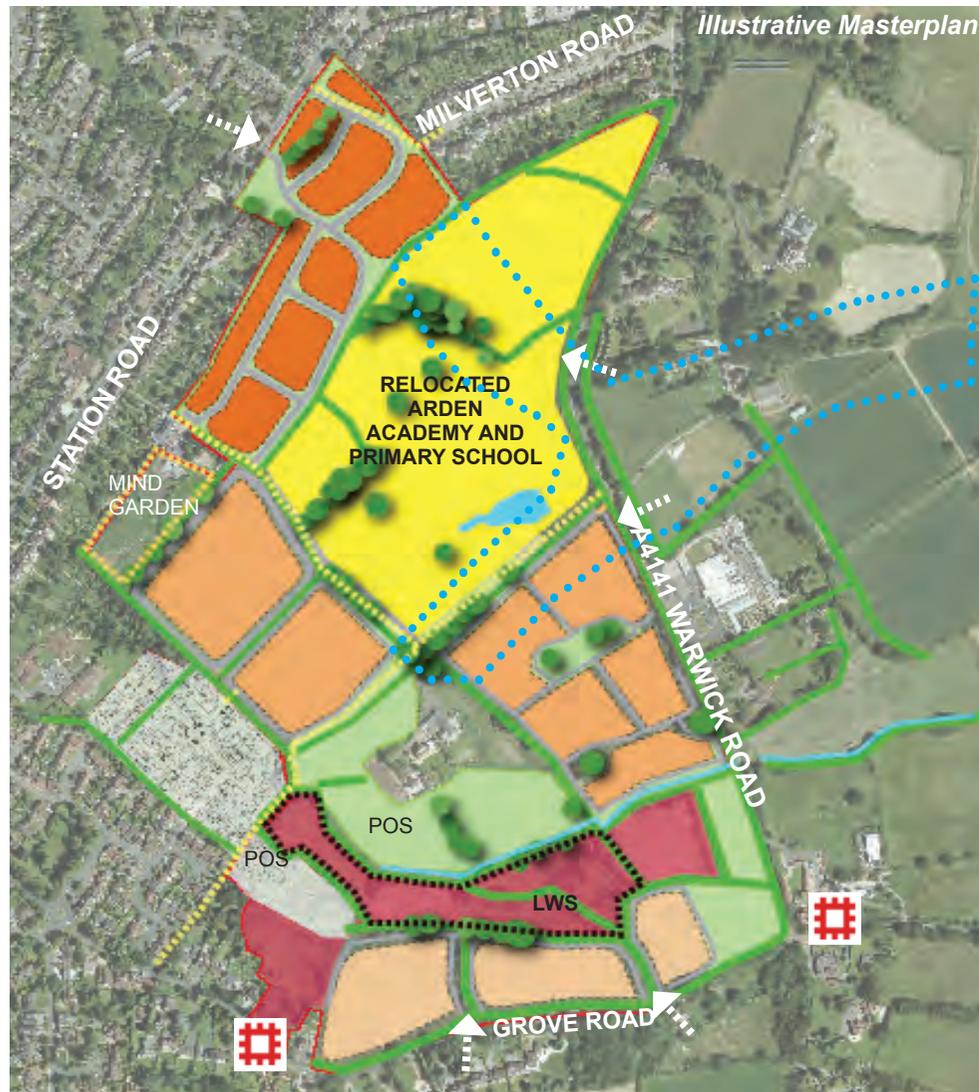
Development along Station Road must reflect an understanding of the character of Knowle and development precedents established on Station Road.

Development must have regard to the setting of the Listed Buildings and should avoid harm to their significances, including through harm to their settings.

Development should look to retain important trees, groups of trees and woodland.

The development should promote walking and cycling both within and beyond the site boundary.

# SMBC Illustrative Concept Masterplan: KN2 Arden Triangle



The site can accommodate 600 homes. There are opportunities for higher density development along Station Road. The density of the housing ranges from 30–40+dph, reducing toward Grove Road. The layout promotes perimeter block development to maximise natural surveillance and encourage active streets.

This layout seeks to retain, important landscape features, and the setting of the built heritage assets this includes the need to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of Knowle Conservation Area, which includes Station Road houses opposite the site. Arden Academy has been moved further into the site and rebuilt alongside a new primary school. Housing has been located along Station Road where it is closer to Knowle’s amenities.

Biodiversity off -setting will be required due to the loss of semi-improved grassland. An integrated drainage, landscape and ecological strategy should be developed for the site. Public open space should provide a green link to the neighbouring Middlefield development, This development will require 4.9ha of public open space. A Doorstep, Local and Neighbourhood Play area will be required. Additional tree planting is promoted across the site.

The current proposal suggests 2 points of access onto the Warwick Road one of these is to serve the new school. There is one access point onto Grove Road and Station Road. This will promote permeability of the site. Green links through the site provide safe walking and cycle routes to the school and to Station Road where there are a number of bus stops which serve the local area.

The site should utilise opportunities to maximise green/blue infrastructure and include linear conveyance SuDS in green routes and optimise layouts to ensure extreme flood flow paths are not impeded.

## Conclusion

The desktop analysis and site survey work has demonstrated the constraints and opportunities associated with the development of the sites.

The housing capacity, together with the associated requirements for public open space, has been established for each of the sites. Opportunities for education facilities have been highlighted.

Much of the detailed survey work and infrastructure analysis including S106 agreements, CIL and final housing mix will need to be considered during the planning application process; therefore although it is recognised that this further work may indicate changes, any significant departure from the principles outlined for the sites will need to be justified, and demonstrate that the overall objectives for the site and its wider context are not compromised.

Discussions have taken place with landowners and the site promoters to establish commercialisation and viability options and parameters for bringing the sites forward.

Previous consultations have helped shape these masterplans.

### Recommendations:

- Once sites have been allocated and infrastructure requirements have been established, design principles for each of the sites should be developed building on the aspirations set out in the concept masterplans.
- Active travel and multi modal routes should be promoted with pedestrian and cycle routes prioritised. This will help to reduce vehicle emissions and create opportunities for healthier lifestyle choices.
- The larger sites and those within close proximity to each other should be considered in their entirety. This applies to the Blythe sites BL1, BL2, and BL3 in particular. Development principles and/or design guidance/codes should be produced in order to ensure *'place making'* is achieved.
- Sites BC1, BC3 and BC4 in Balsall Common will also require an overarching design and development vision to ensure that the sites are brought forward in a sensitive and consider manner to ensure that the natural and built site assets are protected and well integrated.
- The smaller sites will benefit from more detailed pre-application discussions at the planning application stage. A comprehensive Design and Access Statement and Building for Life Assessment should be provided to demonstrate how development has responded to the site context.
- The Natural Capital Planning Tool-kit should be applied to all development coming forward in order to safeguard the Borough's Green Infrastructure and Natural Capital. Natural and historic assets should be retained wherever possible in order to protect the Borough's *Urbs in Rure* character.