

KNOWLE, DORRIDGE AND BENTLEY HEATH NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Potential Solihull Local Plan Housing Allocations: Arden Road Triangle

Site Specific Landscape and Visual Appraisal

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

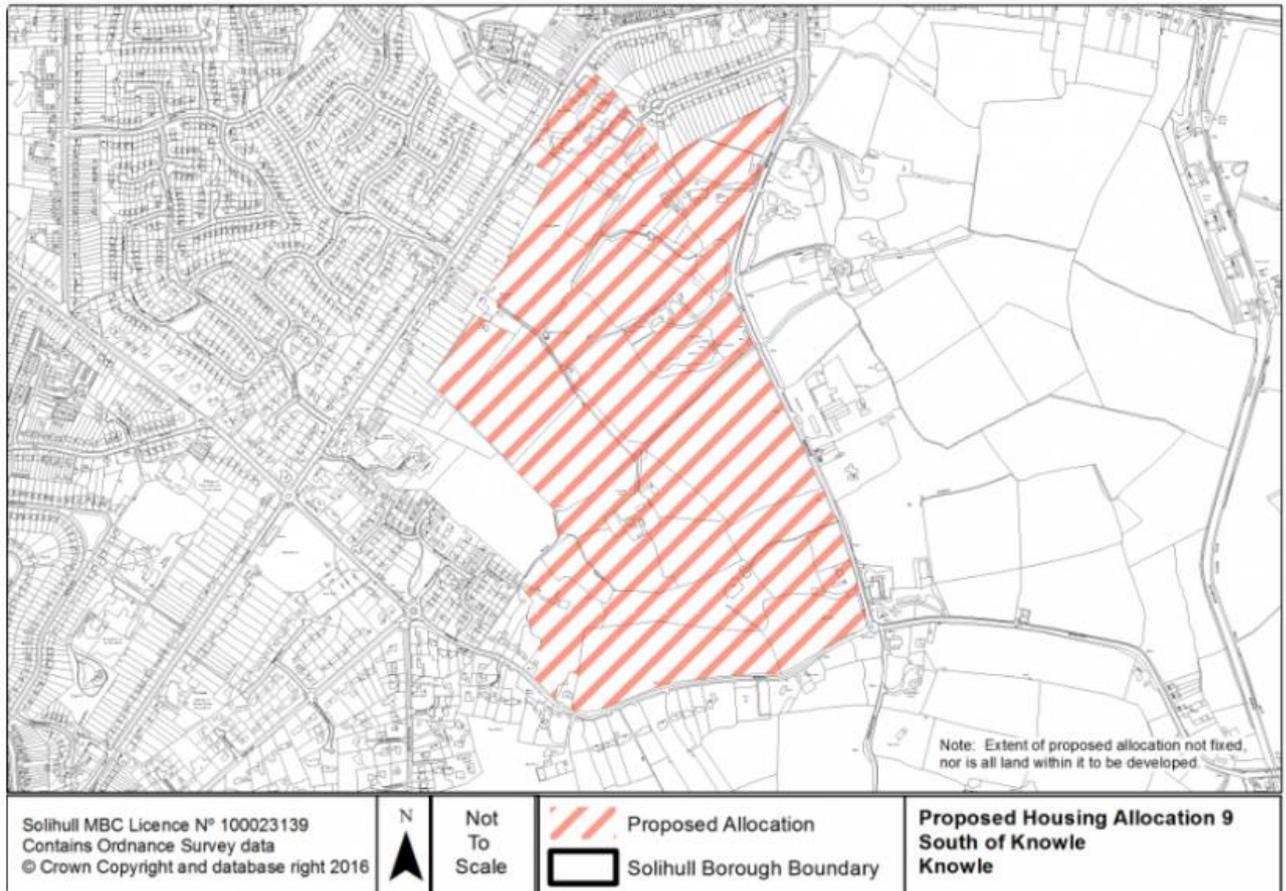
- 1.1.1 Crestwood Environmental Ltd ('Crestwood'), a Registered Practice of the Landscape Institute, were commissioned on behalf of the Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath (KDBH) Neighbourhood Forum, to appraise landscape and visual constraints in relation to potential Housing Allocations being proposed as part of the Solihull Local Plan, with this report specifically considering land known as the 'Arden Road Triangle' ('the Site'), at the southern extents of Knowle (and east of Bentley Heath and northeast of Dorridge).
- 1.1.2 Crestwood have been commissioned by the KDBH Neighbourhood Forum to provide landscape and visual consultancy support, with the objectives being:
- To inform the Forum's responses to the Solihull Draft Local Plan;
 - To inform the preparation of draft Concept Master Plans for the development of the Hampton Road and/ or the Arden Triangle sites in the event that these sites are confirmed allocated for housing and community use development in the Solihull Local Plan; and
 - To inform responses to planning applications affecting the KDBH Plan Area during the Plan Period.
- 1.1.3 The KDBH Neighbourhood Forum wishes to ensure that adverse impacts on landscape character, in the Green Belt locations, is minimised and that any new development seeks to improve the quality of the surrounding landscape and public access.
- 1.1.4 It is noted that this report forms part of a series of documents or advice notes being prepared for the KDBH Neighbourhood Forum both in relation to differing aspects of the commission and differing potential housing allocation sites.

1.2 THE SITE AND POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

- 1.2.1 The Site is roughly located between the A4141 Warwick Road forming the eastern boundary of the Site and properties off Station Road forming the western boundary of the Site. The northern boundary is formed by the existing Arden Academy and properties at Milverton Road. The southern boundary is formed by a local minor road, Grove Road. Rotten Row hamlet is at the southeastern extents of the Site. The southwestern extents of the Site adjoin new housing development off Barton Drive.
- 1.2.2 The Site formed a proposed allocation in the Draft Solihull Local Plan 2016 and comprises a collation of land parcels (referenced as 1010, inc. 148, 149, 151, 152, 153, 154 & 156). The overall proposed area of the proposed allocation is shown at Plate 1. The total Site area is referenced as circa 46ha and can roughly accommodate 750 dwellings. Further provision is made for a replacement secondary school for Arden Academy, as well as potential primary school provision.
- 1.2.3 However, it is understood that there is some uncertainty as to how the Site would be bought forward for development. The Site has been promoted by a number of interested parties, including:
- Urban Vision on behalf of the Arden Academy and adjacent land parcels;
 - The Lansdowne Partnership - land at Lansdowne;

- Landowners at Lansdowne Farm; and
- Cerda Planning Ltd. On behalf of the Kier Group

Plate 1 Site Location and Allocation Proposal (Draft Solihull Local Plan 2016)



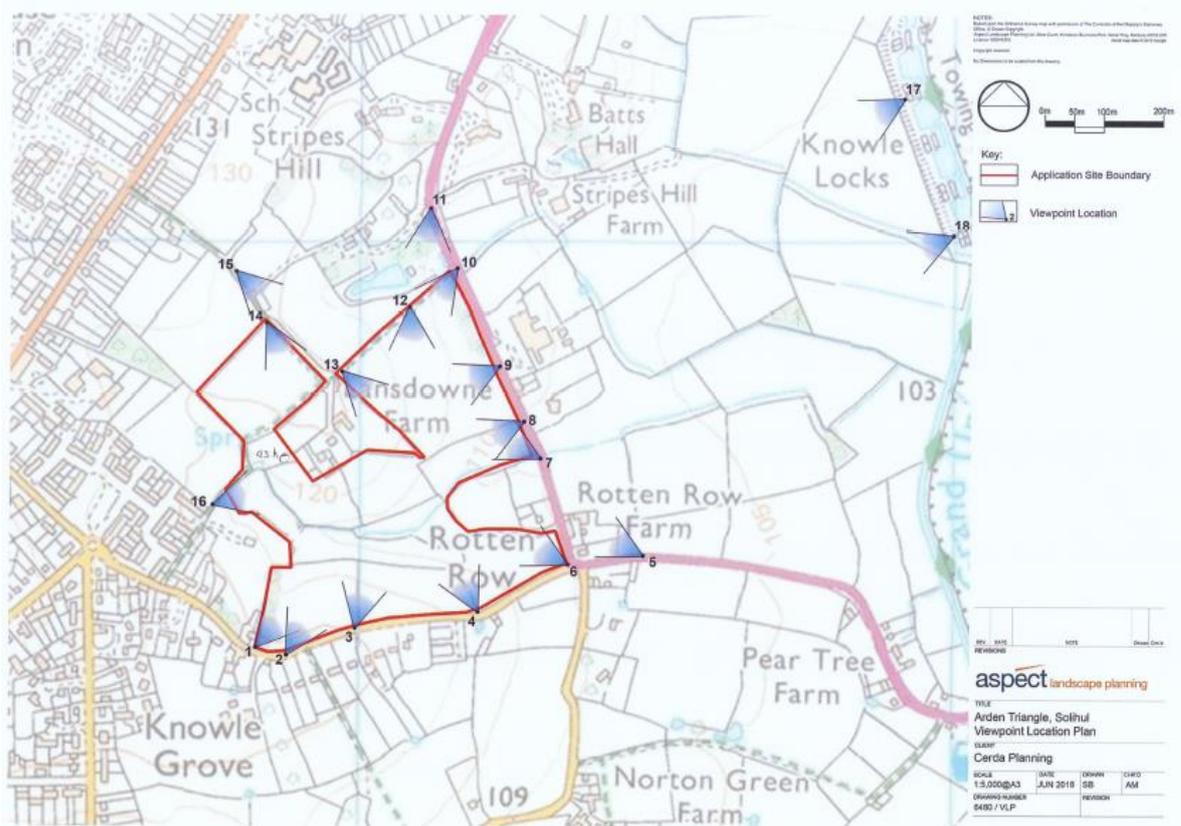
1.2.4 A 2016 Call for Sites Supporting Statement entitled 'The Arden Triangle - A Strategic Opportunity for Major Community Benefit and Growth' submitted on behalf of the Arden Academy promotes a combination of housing, a replacement for Arden Academy and improved Primary School provision. The document also appears to promote a masterplan for the Arden Triangle referenced as the Indicative Development Potential Plan (Ref: UV/006959-L-001). The Supporting Statement also indicates that the delivery of the Arden Academy proposal relies on other land in the proposed allocation area:

"The Head of Arden has also instigated discussion with private landowners of key sites within the area bounded by Warwick Road to the east and Grove Road to the south, whose support will be paramount in achieving the assembly of a site of sufficient size to accommodate the new Arden Centre and the associated playing fields and external environment features that would be required. The potential site is currently landlocked and potential access options will also be a matter for negotiation with landowners".

1.2.5 Based on current submission information, broadly speaking Urban Vision on behalf of Arden Academy has promoted land parcels in the north of the Arden Triangle (around Stripes Hill), and land forming roughly the southern half of the Arden Triangle has been separately promoted by the individual landowners and Cerda Planning Ltd.

1.2.6 It is understood that separate plans have been drawn up outlining development proposals in the southern half of the Arden Triangle by Cerda Planning Ltd on behalf of the landowners and Kier Group Ltd and some of the various feasibility work commissioned by Cerda Planning Ltd may have focussed solely on the southern land parcel.

Plate 2 Plan showing southern land area on behalf of Cerda Planning Ltd – Landscape Viewpoint Plan



1.2.7 There may be some uncertainty as to whether all of the land parcels comprising the Arden Triangle proposed allocation (refer Plate 1) are being equally promoted or at similar stages of consideration. As the parcels are being separately promoted, it is unclear if a unified masterplan is being developed for the proposed allocation and it is noted that the Arden Academy vision appears interrelated to the development of other areas.

1.2.8 To this end, and pursuant to further consultation on the Draft Solihull Local Plan (Consultation January 2019), Solihull MBC has produced two Illustrative Masterplan Options for the proposed allocation. Importantly, both options appear to have reduced the proposed housing provision from 750 dwellings (as originally envisaged in the SHLAA) to 600 dwellings as indicated by the masterplans. Both options appear to broadly treat the eastern and southern extent of the Site similarly development wise; however the main difference relates to whether the Arden Academy is retained at its current location, or relocated and replaced by housing. Plates 3 and 4 show the proposed illustrative masterplans.

1.2.9 This appraisal seeks to identify the landscape and visual characteristics of the Site as a whole, with subsequent recommendations as to the potential for any Site wide allocation.

Plate 3 SMBC Illustrative Emerging Concept Masterplan: Site 9 Arden Triangle – Option 1



Illustrative Masterplan



Medium to low density housing is appropriate in this semi rural location. 600 homes can be accommodated on the site. The density of the housing ranges from 30–40dwph, 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. Arden Academy remains in its current position which also helps to minimise the potential impact of development on the setting of the MIND Garden.

Biodiversity off-setting will be required due to the loss of semi-improved grassland. This area of the site however should be retained as open space to provide a green link to the neighbouring Middlefield development. Based on 600 homes this development will require 3.9 Ha of public open space. A Doorstep, Local and Neighbourhood Play area will be required.

The current proposal suggests 3 points of access onto the Warwick Road and one access point onto Grove 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.

Plate 4 SMBC Illustrative Emerging Concept Masterplan: Site 9 Arden Triangle – Option 2



Page 125



600 homes can be accommodated on the site. There are opportunities for higher density development along Station Road. The density of the housing ranges from 30–40+dwph, 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. Arden Academy has been moved further into the site and rebuilt to make more efficient use of land. Housing has been located along Station Road where it is closer to Knowles amenities.

Biodiversity off-setting will be required due to the loss of semi-improved grassland. This area of the site however should be retained as open space to provide a green link to the neighbouring Middlefield development. Based on 600 homes this development will require 3.9 Ha of public open space. A Doorstep, Local and Neighbourhood Play area will be required.

The current proposal suggests 3 points of access onto the Warwick Road and 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.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

- 1.3.1 Landscape and visual assessment is comprised of a study of two separate but inter-linked components:
- **Landscape character** – which is the physical make-up and condition of the landscape itself. Landscape character arises from a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of physical and social elements, aesthetic factors and perceptual aspects; and
 - **Visual amenity** – which is the way in which the Site is seen and appreciated; views to and from the Site, their direction, character and sensitivity to change.
- 1.3.2 This appraisal, carried out by a suitably qualified Chartered Landscape Architect, is conducted with regard to the principles set out in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition ('GLVIA3'), (Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, 2013), Topic Paper 6: Techniques for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, January 2004), as well as other relevant guidance.
- 1.3.3 The appraisal undertaken is proportionate to scope of the commission (i.e. to provide landscape and visual support to the KDBH Neighbourhood Forum), such that concise 'outline' advice can be provided in respect of landscape and visual considerations.
- 1.3.4 Crestwood have undertaken an appraisal of key landscape and visual characteristics of the land, and potential constraints to the Potential Development, which included the following key tasks:
- A desktop study and web search of relevant background documents and maps, including reviews of aerial photographs, LPA publications and other landscape character assessments;
 - Collated information about any relevant landscape designations, such as National Parks, and those parks and gardens listed on Heritage England's national register;
 - A brief field assessment of local site circumstances including a photographic survey of potential views from within and towards the Site, undertaken in July 2018 (refer to Appendix L1); and
 - An outline analysis of the constraints, and likely effects of the Potential Development, including potential mitigation and restoration, on landscape and views. (A Landscape Constraints Plan is provided at Appendix L2).
- 1.3.5 Key Green Belt considerations and constraints are also summarised in this report.
- 1.3.6 As the scope of the commission relates to the development draft Solihull Local Plan, at this stage, a review of the landscape policy/planning context for the Site falls outside the scope of this appraisal, however, consideration has been given to the presence of any local landscape designations currently defined by the Local Planning Authority (Solihull Metropolitan Council). Current extant planning policy does not indicate any local landscape designation policy.
- 1.3.7 Reference to the national planning policy is made where relevant to inform recommendations in the report.
- 1.3.8 A cumulative assessment falls outside the scope of this report.

GENERAL LIMITATIONS

- 1.3.9 The Site's boundaries relate to plans of the Prospect Area provided by the Client prior to the survey.

Any subsequent amendments to the boundary may alter recommendations made in this report if amended plans are provided following the survey. Limited details in relation to proposed working and phasing are currently available; the Site has been considered as a whole in relation to the general principles of development.

- 1.3.10 An attended Site visit was undertaken across the Site in July 2018, organised in conjunction with Urban Vision and Cerda Planning Ltd, in addition review of the Site via local Public Rights of Way and local Public Highways.

2 BASELINE SITUATION

2.1 LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

- 2.1.1 The land is not nationally designated in respect of landscape importance (i.e. National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty etc.). The land does not fall within 2km of any such designation.
- 2.1.2 No part of the Site lies within or near to a non-statutorily, locally designated landscape.
- 2.1.3 Whilst not a landscape designation, the Site does fall within the Green Belt.

2.2 REGISTERED PARKS AND GARDENS

- 2.2.1 No part of the Site lies within a Registered Park or Garden, with none falling within 2km of the Site.

2.3 LISTED BUILDINGS, SCHEDULED MONUMENTS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

- 2.3.1 A formal assessment of the historical setting of these heritage features falls outside the scope of this report and the professional experience of the report author. Irrespective of this, to help ascertain whether there were potential landscape-related effects of the Potential Development on heritage features the following has been determined.
- 2.3.2 The land does not fall within a Conservation Area. Knowle Conservation Area is lies on the opposite side of Station Road north of Arden Academy. There is pre-existing intervisibility. Warwick Road also leads northwards in to the Conservation Area, with the northeastern boundary of the Site within circa 200m of the Conservation Area, separated by properties off Milverton Road. Detailed further consideration of the interrelationship between the Site and the setting of the Knowle Conservation Area.
- 2.3.3 Notwithstanding wider considerations, the landscape treatment of the Warwick Road corridor on approach northwards in to Knowle and towards the Conservation Area is a key landscape and visual consideration, to ensure any development retains ‘the Rural Village character’ and preserves the transition between the settled area and adjacent countryside to the south and southeast of Knowle.
- 2.3.4 No Scheduled Monuments fall within the Site or in close proximity.
- 2.3.5 There are no listed buildings within the Site. The nearest Listed Buildings are the ‘Barn on the northeast side of Grove Road (adjacent to the southern Site boundary), Rotten Row Farmhouse (Grade II) near the southeastern boundary of the Site and various buildings to the north within the Conservation Area. The relative importance of the Site to the setting, both in terms of intervisibility and historic landuse, must be assessed in detail from a Cultural and Heritage perspective to assess the potential for adverse impacts.

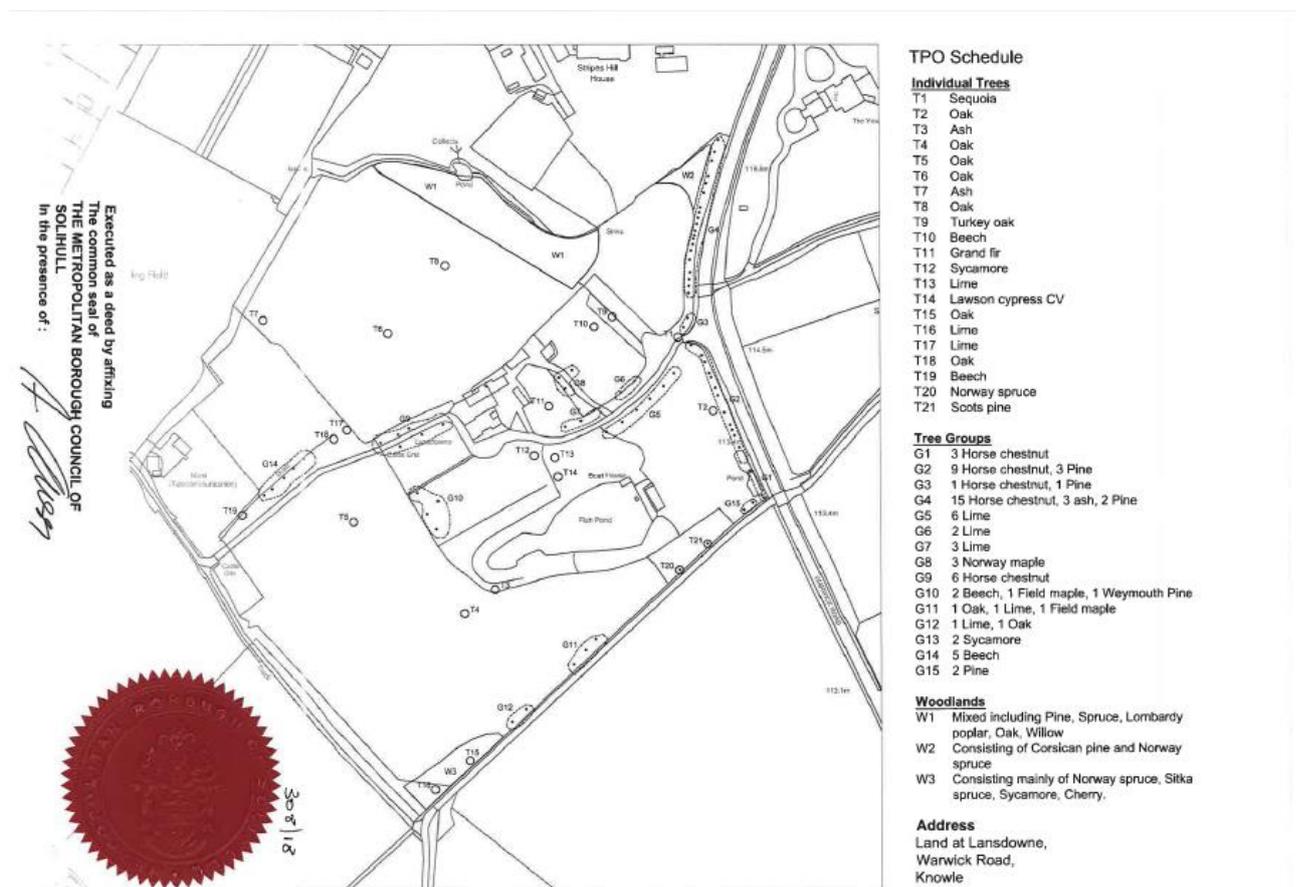
2.3.6 The Grand Union Canal is, at least in part, a non-designated heritage asset located circa 650m west of the Site at its closest. The Grand Union Canal Walk Long Distance Path (LDP) follows the route of the canal and would be a highly sensitive visual receptor.

2.4 ANCIENT WOODLAND AND TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS

2.4.1 There are no areas of ancient woodland within or in close proximity to the Site.

2.4.2 A Tree Preservation Order (TPO) has been identified at the Arden Triangle, in relation to land and Lansdowne off the Warwick Road (ref: TPO 01150). This covers an extensive number of trees, groups of trees and woodland blocks. A further search for TPOs is recommended for the rest of the Arden Triangle.

Plate 5 Lansdowne TPO Plan



2.5 ECOLOGICAL CONSERVATION

2.5.1 The land does not contain or overlap any national or international designations for ecological conservation. No other national or international designations fall within the study area.

2.5.2 There is a Potential Local Wildlife Site (LWS) which follows the alignment of Cuttle Brook through the southern half of the Site, roughly between Rotten Row and Barton Drive.

2.5.3 A further LWS falls immediately south of Grove Road, southeast of the Site.

2.6 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY AND OPEN ACCESS LAND

2.6.1 There is no 'Access Land' within the Site in close proximity to the Site. No Registered Common Land

or has been identified within or adjacent to the Site. The Site does not comprise, nor appear in close proximity, to a Country Park, Millennium, Village or Doorstep Green.

- 2.6.2 A public footpath passes roughly across the Site on a southwest – northeast alignment between Grove Road/Barton Drive and Warwick Road. The footpath passes north of Lansdowne Farm and along the southern side of the boundary treeline and hedgerow delineating the southern extent of the Lansdowne land parcel. East of Lansdowne Farm the footpath follows a formal access track leading to the Warwick Road.
- 2.6.3 A public bridleway leads northwestwards along a track connecting Station Road with the public footpath north of Lansdowne Farm.
- 2.6.4 The Grand Union Canal Walk LDP is circa 650m east of the Site at its closest.
- 2.6.5 Warwick Road lies immediately adjacent to the eastern boundary of the Site and is a key transport route connecting rural and countryside locations south of Knowle, in to the village. The southern half of the eastern Site boundary is lined by a mix of non-native and coniferous trees, limited in width and with limited understorey, and intermittent hedgerow cover, filtering views in to the Site to a variable degree. Leading northwards towards Knowle, boundary tree cover increases as the road rises in level. In combination with further internal tree cover, views in to the Site are generally well screened or very filtered. A pavement follows the route of the road on its eastern side from the adjacent garden centre towards Knowle.
- 2.6.6 Grove Road forms the southern boundary of the Site, lined by a continuous hedgerow with occasional trees.
- 2.6.7 Station Road is predominantly separated from the Site by existing housing that aligns the road. The road directly passes north of Arden Academy.

2.7 WATER COURSES AND WATER BODIES

- 2.7.1 There is a large fish pond south of the main house at Lansdowne. Cuttle Brook leads roughly east west through the southern half of the Site. A small number of other ponds are indicated on OS maps in the northern and southern parts of the Site.

2.8 LOCAL LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

- 2.8.1 The large Site comprises a number of areas exhibiting differing landscape characteristics and qualities.
- 2.8.2 The northern extent of the Site is defined by the Arden Academy comprising several large buildings of varying age. The academy appears relatively contained to the north and southwest by existing residential development. Station Road forms the northwestern boundary of the Academy. This frontage comprises a small amenity grassed area with occasional young and maturing tree cover. Associated car parking is set back from the road in front of the school.
- 2.8.3 The Academy grounds extend southwestwards parallel with the rear boundary of properties along Station Road. These sports grounds transition from more formal or enclosed outdoor sports facilities, to open sports (rugby) pitches which are bounded to the west by the public bridleway. Further rugby pitches lie within a rectangular field parcel to the south of the Bridleway separated from the rear of properties off Station Road by a separate 'garden' or informally landscaped area south of Griswolde House, a dwelling adjacent to the bridleway. The pitch area comprises the

- highpoint within the Site at around 130mAOD.
- 2.8.4 The Academy grounds are lined by boundary vegetation and mature tree cover that separates the grounds from those of Lansdowne. The rugby pitches south of the bridleway are well lined by mature hedgerows and tree cover.
- 2.8.5 As the bridleway passes the south of the first pitch area, there are views towards the academy. Beyond the boundary of the Academy grounds, the bridleway is lined on at least one side by mature hedgerow and tree cover.
- 2.8.6 The gardens to the rear of properties at Station Road are relatively long and in conjunction with tree cover, boundary landscaping and fence lines, whilst there is a degree of overlooking, this appears restricted to upper floor windows.
- 2.8.7 Southeast of the pitch area comprises the grounds of Lansdowne. Lansdowne is large unoccupied house (with outbuildings and glasshouses) in the centre of a large, roughly square area of grounds that adjoin the Warwick Road. The road frontage is well lined by tree cover. There is a private drive and access that leads from the Warwick Road to the house. This is lined by a distinctive line of lime trees (subject to TPO). South of the house there are more formal 'garden' areas that terrace down to a lake/ large fish pond. Further planting beds lie to the west of the property. There are also a number of open drains, especially near tracks and there is a mobile phone mast in the northwestern corner of the Lansdowne parcel.
- 2.8.8 The landform of the Lansdowne parcel generally falls eastwards from around 127mAOD to c. 118mAOD at the Warwick Road. It is noted that the frontage with the Warwick Road is a landform transition, with the road rising from around 110mAOD to about 127mAOD on the approach in to Knowle.
- 2.8.9 The arrangement of the landscape elements roughly splits the Lansdowne parcel in to four quarters. The boundary of the entire parcel is well lined by a combination of hedgerow, tree and woodland cover. Mixed woodland cover is more prevalent in the north of the land parcel. There are a number of significant trees individually located in and around the wider grounds. There is good tree cover that aligns the track leading west of the house. The fields north of the house appear to keep a small number of livestock. The public footpath and bridleway follow on the outside of hedgerow and tree cover bounding the grounds of Lansdowne at its southern and western boundaries respectively. During summer months, the combination of vegetation cover generally filters and restricts any views in to the grounds of Lansdowne to specific locations.
- 2.8.10 Overall, the arrangement of landscape elements provides a more 'parkland' type landscape with centralised more formal gardens, noting that the majority of tree and woodland cover are covered by TPOs. The fish pond is also a significant landscape features of the Site, as well of the mature and treelines that align the driveway and track through the Site.
- 2.8.11 A triangular wedge of land lies between Lansdowne, the Academy and dwellings at Milverton Drive, which contains Stripes Hill House in the centre of the land parcel. Access was not obtainable at the time of the Site visit. The land is separated from Lansdowne by a mixed woodland block. The parcel is well bounded by tree cover, particularly at the boundary with the Warwick Road where there is a well vegetated road corridor containing and screening the land parcel. Overall, this parcel is likely to be of a similar character to Lansdowne.
- 2.8.12 Lansdowne Farm falls to the south of the southernmost corner of the Lansdowne grounds. The

farmstead comprises two redeveloped large modern houses amongst other farm buildings and development. The public footpath follows a track from the farmstead on the south side of the Lansdowne grounds towards the Warwick Road.

- 2.8.13 South of the footpath is a large square shaped arable field, bounded by hedgerows and tree cover. The roadside vegetation is patchy comprising mixed tree cover (e.g. tall pines) with limited understorey. This allows filtered views from Warwick Road as well as intervisibility with the adjacent garden centre complex. There are significant groups of mature trees that lead east west through the centre of the field, possibly indicative of historic boundary hedgerow trees. These are significant landscape features.
- 2.8.14 It is noted that the northwestern corner of this field is the high point (c. 126mAOD) with 10m plus falls to the south and to the east towards the Warwick Road. From this point intervisibility is indicated further afield towards the Grand Union Canal to the east and to high ground to the far south of the Site, over the top of the settled tree cover with the shallow valley of the Cuttle Brook. As such, development within this field is likely to be of increased visibility from the east and far south of the Site, where public receptor locations exist, compared to other parts of the Site.
- 2.8.15 A further smaller arable field lies to the northwest of Lansdowne Farm, lying immediately northeast of a new housing development off Barton Drive. Whilst the field itself is well lined by high hedges and mature tree cover, the public footpath and bridleway follow the inside of these boundaries. These routes afford views towards the new housing development (comprising up to three storey dwellings), which overlooks the field, with the fielding sloping gently towards the built area.
- 2.8.16 Further south of the Lansdowne Farm the landscape transitions to a series of smaller, more irregular shaped pasture fields, across a gently falling landform towards Cuttle Brook, lined by trees and vegetation. It is noted that the individual fields all have extensive hedgerow and tree cover which combine to visually present a more wooded valley appearance compared to the reality. A pond is also present along the length of the brook. The brook flows eastwards at levels between c. 115mAOD and 110mAOD. A spring is indicated at the western boundary of the Site.
- 2.8.17 Further south of the Cuttle Brook, land generally rises towards Grove Road, except at the southeastern extents of the Site which remains fairly flat. Grove Road lies at levels between c. 111mAOD and c. 126mAOD along the southern boundary of the Site, rising in a westerly direction.
- 2.8.18 Three small arable fields lie immediately north of Grove Road, falling towards Cuttle Brook and the adjacent pasture areas. Each of the fields is separated by mature hedgerow and tree cover. A hedgerow lines Grove Road with occasional mature trees and telegraph poles.
- 2.8.19 Grove Road comprises some intermittent large dwelling ribbon development, generally set back from the road side, leading towards Dorridge. The route comprises a transitional landscape between rural countryside and the urban setting of Dorridge. It is notable that the combination of tree cover along Cuttle Brook and in relation to existing field boundaries provides a more wooded visual appearance and also limits depth of view in to the Site and predominantly screens intervisibility with built development at Knowle and adjacent built up areas.
- 2.8.20 Whilst the northern and western extents of the Site are defined by residential and urban influences, the southern and western boundaries of the Site are predominantly rural in character, with the garden centre and ribbon development forming evidence of human influence within the context of a wider agricultural landscape.

2.9 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENTS

2.9.1 The Site lies within the **Arden** National Character Area (NCA97) (Natural England, 2014). Key characteristics for this character area, include:

- *Well-wooded farmland landscape with rolling landform.*
- *Mature oaks, mostly found within hedgerows, together with ancient woodlands, and plantation woodlands that often date from the time of enclosure. Woodlands include historic coppice bounded by woodbanks.*
- *Narrow, meandering clay river valleys with long river meadows; the River Blythe SSSI lying between the cities of Coventry and Birmingham is a good example of this.*
- *Numerous areas of former wood-pasture with large, old, oak trees often associated with isolated remnants of more extensive heathlands.*
- *Diverse field patterns, ranging from well hedged, irregular fields and small woodlands that contrast with larger semi regular fields on former deer park estates, such as, Packington Hall and Stoneleigh Park.*
- *Complex and contrasting settlement pattern with some densely populated where traditional settlements have amalgamated to form the major West Midlands conurbation while some settlements remain distinct and relatively well dispersed.*
- *North-eastern industrial area based around former Warwickshire coalfield, with distinctive colliery settlements. North-western area dominated by urban development and associated urban edge landscapes such as managed greenspace, for example allotments, gardens, parks, golf courses (rough areas) and public open spaces; playing fields, churchyards, cemeteries and institutional grounds (schools, hospitals).*
- *Transport infrastructure, the M42, M40, M6 and M5 are major transport corridors that sit within the landscape of this NCA.*

2.9.2 The Solihull Local Plan Review: Draft Landscape Assessment, Character and Open Space (March 2018) identifies the key local landscape character information relevant to the Site along with a brief 'site assessment'; this information is replicated below. It is noted that a Site assessment for the Arden Triangle was still to be provided.

Landscape Character

The site is within the *Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines* Arden Pastures and the overall character of this landscape character area is of *A small scale, enclosed landscape, often pervaded by suburban influences and characterised by small fields, typically bordered by mature hedgerows.*

Characteristic features are evident on this site:

- A well defined pattern of small fields and paddocks.
- Numerous mature hedgerow oaks.
- A network of minor lanes often with ribbon development.

The field pattern is varied, including geometric semi-irregular and irregular shaped fields. The latter are typically bounded by ancient mixed hedgerows. (P12)



The locally listed building sits in a farmed landscape with a mix of native and ornamental trees

This site has retained some of the historic field pattern to the south, which helps to retain the landscape character.

In terms of a management strategy, the guidelines recommend:

- Maintain the wooded character of mature hedgerow and roadside oaks.
- **Conserve the historic field pattern of small hedged fields.**
- Conserve the diversity and special character of old permanent pastures

Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines - Arden

Landscape Character Area 3 Knowle & Dorridge Fringe

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.

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.

Character area guidelines: (P28)

- **Resist loss of field boundaries to retain irregular and historic field pattern to south of the area. Discourage the amalgamation of fields.**

- Identify appropriate access points to the countryside and ensure that new facilities, signs and paths are low-key and respect landscape character.
- Encourage appropriate management to retain strong hedgerow structure and the planting of **individual trees along field boundaries**

Landscape character sensitivity: Medium.

This is a landscape with a strong sense of local connection to the place, ...There are a few detracting features within the landscape including poor legibility of the canal and some of the suburban influences.' (P29)

Landscape visual sensitivity: Low. *'The general visibility in this LCA is contained, short distance and low level where small scale fields and watercourses add intimacy and close down views across the area. (P29)*

Landscape value: Medium. *... 'The wooded watercourses along with the ancient woodlands are key to the local distinctiveness. (P29).*

Landscape capacity: Low- *... 'likely to be able to accommodate small areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness. Any new development should not result in the loss of the irreplaceable habitats or destroy the setting of the Grand Union Canal and Knowle Conservation Area.'*

Solihull Landscape Character Assessment (Waterman December 2016)

April 2018

Solihull Local Plan Site Allocations – Appendix 1

Site assessment

TBC

Opportunities

The landscape character in the southern area is the most valuable and should look to be retained, and enhanced. This is also an area with notable ecological value, and there is an opportunity to link the areas within the site to those outside and adjacent.

Planting of native tree species characteristic of the Arden Landscape along the principal transport routes are to be encouraged in order to restore the appropriate 'sense of place'.

Any POS and play should be located around

POS Requirement

This site will require Doorstep, Local and Neighbourhood Play Area as nearest facility is beyond recommended walking distance of 1000m – the closest park and play area is at Knowle Park which is approximately 0.9km from the site (direct 0.9km, 1.21km walking distance away from the centre of the northern section of the site).



App.1_28

Solihull Council Conservation & Historic Environment, Landscape Architecture, Ecology and Urban Design

3 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ANALYSIS

3.1 VISUAL ASPECTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1.1 Overall, notwithstanding the scale of the Site, the Site does appear relatively visually contained, exerting limited influence on the wider landscape, such as to the east of the Warwick Road. Whilst the principle views of any development would be from relatively close range, this is predominantly a function of the existing level of tree cover within and at the peripheries of the Site. An illustrative photographic record is shown at Appendix L1 from various locations around the Site.
- 3.1.2 The visual containment of the existing settled areas of Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath from intervisibility further east is entirely related on the retention of the extensive mature hedgerow and tree cover in the Site. The combination of tree and hedgerow cover, in conjunction with the landform, visually presents a more wooded appearance than the reality of actual woodland cover.
- 3.1.3 The nature of the hedgerow and tree cover also ensures that each field or land parcel is relatively discreet or compartmentalised, allowing retention of boundary vegetation to limit visual effects. Extensive views across the Site are generally not achieved and not all of the Site is visible from any one location.
- 3.1.4 Key visual receptors within the Site are the public rights of way, which provide an important rural experience on the edge of the settled area. There are also existing dwellings, especially those at Lansdowne Farm, where visual amenity will be a consideration.
- 3.1.5 The southern extents of the Site adjacent to Grove Road are overlooked by existing large dwellings and ribbon development, which will be key visual receptors.
- 3.1.6 The new development at Barton Drive, comprising 3-storey dwellings also overlook the arable field at the western boundary of the Site and to a degree the rugby pitches, where intervening tree or woodland cover is absent.
- 3.1.7 Whilst there is likely to be a degree of screening, there would also be the potential for overlooking from properties along Station Road and Milverton Road, which needs to be carefully considered.
- 3.1.8 A key visual receptor route relates to the Warwick Road corridor. This is visually perceived as a rural transition northwards towards the Knowle Conservation Area. This is particularly evident as the route transitions from the southern half of the Site, being agricultural in nature with an adjacent garden centre, towards Knowle where boundary and adjacent tree cover increases until clearly at the settlement limits of Knowle.
- 3.1.9 To make any development acceptable, it is considered significant landscaping improvements would be needed along the eastern boundary of the southern half of the Site. In comparison to further north within the Site, boundary vegetation cover adjacent to the Warwick Road in the southern half of the Site is weak, lacks and understory or continuous hedge and comprises pine trees with a high canopy. This allows views from the Warwick Road, the garden centre and potentially intervisibility from the Grand Union Canal, further afield.
- 3.1.10 The location of access points along the Warwick Road would also need to be carefully considered to limit the sense of multiple residential areas and also retain a more rural character without extensive road works.

- 3.1.11 Whilst the Arden Academy is an existing built development, any replacement by housing development had the potential to visually improve the scene along Station Road, particularly in relation to the adjacent Conservation Area to the north.
- 3.1.12 Visually the northeastern parts of the Site, around Lansdowne House, comprise increased tree cover and more of a 'parkland' type setting. This replicates a similar visual perception of land immediately east of the Warwick Road, and provides the rural-urban transition in to Knowle and the adjacent conservation area.
- 3.1.13 Whilst extensive long range views are not necessarily anticipated, this should only be determined after extensive assessment of winter visibility which has the potential to be significantly different to summer visibility due to the nature of tree cover at the Site and in the wider landscape.

3.2 LANDSCAPE ASPECTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.2.1 Refer to Appendix L2 for Landscape Constraints Plan.
- 3.2.2 Overall, the most highly valued landscape characteristics within the Site are the mature hedgerows, tree cover and Cuttle Brook. The combination of these features is intrinsic to the character of the various land parcels within the Site. They are important green infrastructure corridors, enhancing landscape connectivity, which should be protected, which in themselves would help integrate any development proposals. The linear features should be retained, such that any development proposals broadly respect the existing field pattern.
- 3.2.3 Equally there is some evidence of historic hedgerow cover in the form of existing boundary hedgerow trees still present within field parcels. These features should be retained and there is scope to enhance and allow new planting.
- 3.2.4 The draft Solihull landscape assessment considers that the southern half of the Site is most valuable and should be retained and enhanced in terms of landscape character. The combination of small irregular pasture fields, with hedgerows and extensive tree cover, along the Cuttle Brook contrasts the adjacent arable fields, providing an overall rural landscape in close proximity to the settled area. The area comprises a number of highly valued and sensitive landscape features.
- 3.2.5 The vegetation and mature tree cover along the Cuttle Brook provide a prominent landscape feature that also separates the southern extents of the Site adjacent to Grove Road from the wider Site. Development in these southern field parcels would be disparate from the wider Site and due to the nature of the Grove Road and the adjacent small number of large dwellings, these field parcels are not considered appropriate for higher numbers of dwellings beyond the existing ribbon development type existing along Grove Road. The retention of Grove Road as a transitional route will also help preserve the landscape character relationship on approach in to Dorridge. Any development would also likely require major highways improvements which would further deteriorate the transitional rural character.
- 3.2.6 Development in close proximity to Cuttle Brook should be avoided and the overall character of small scale, irregular, hedgerow delineated pasture fields retained.
- 3.2.7 Whilst the arable fields adjacent to Warwick Road are not necessarily sensitive in their own right, the adjacent hedgerow and tree cover, and remnant hedgerow trees are important landscape features worthy of retention.
- 3.2.8 Any development adjacent to the Warwick Road in the southern extents of the Site would need

significant improvement to the roadside landscaping with a significant increase in the density of planting and size of buffer planting to any development. This is particularly important to retain the rural transitional character leading northwards in to Knowle, noting roadside tree and woodland cover increases on approach to Knowle. Therefore any development further south would appear more visually separated along the route. Notwithstanding this, the eastern extents of the Site particularly in the southern half of the Site would be most distant from the existing settled area and in landscape terms would rely on other areas of intervening land to the settled area being developed to make potentially acceptable.

- 3.2.9 Further north along the Warwick Road, the Lansdowne parcel (and to some degree the Stripes Hill House parcel) have a 'parkland' type landscape. This is of a similar character to land east of Warwick Road, which bounds the southern edge of Knowle (Stripes Hill).
- 3.2.10 The Lansdowne parcel is notable for the high proportion of TPO trees, tree groups and woodland cover, which should be protected and retained. Whilst it is noted the Lansdowne parcel would benefit from a long-term management solution to prevent degradation of the landscape, this is considered an important transitional landscape on the edge of Knowle. The fish pond, terraced garden and avenue of lime trees along the driveway entrance are also considered important landscape features and locally distinctive. These should be retained or incorporated in to any proposals and the quantum of development adapted accordingly. As the trackways through the parcel are tree lined, their utilisation as access routes for a larger development is questionable as they may not be suitable for two-way traffic. A one-way routing system may be achievable which may better retain trees.
- 3.2.11 Whilst not necessarily an important aspect to the Site, the historic provenance of the landscaping within the Lansdowne parcel should also be considered in further detail, to further assess the importance of the Site in relation to the historic setting of Knowle (and Conservation Area), but also to inform any development proposals.
- 3.2.12 The Arden Academy and associated sports pitches offer limited landscape constraints to any redevelopment potential. The area can be appropriately contained by retaining adjacent boundary tree cover. A key consideration will be the relationship between any new development areas and adjacent dwellings along Station Road and Milverton Road and integration via any new landscaping.
- 3.2.13 The two field parcels (the arable field and rugby pitches) between the new development area at Barton Drive and the Lansdowne parcel are well contained by existing boundary hedgerow and tree cover, which should be retained. The arable field in particular is overlooked by the adjacent bridleway and footpath that follow along the inside of the field boundaries. The fields are also overlooked by the adjacent new development area.
- 3.2.14 In landscape terms, the southern half of the Site south of the public footpath and Lansdowne Farm is the most highly sensitive area of the Site and has the lower landscape capacity for development. Assuming Cuttle Brook and the adjacent areas are retained there appears limited landscape justification for larger housing development north of Grove Road, which would be relatively disconnected from the wider settled areas or rest of the Site and would detrimentally effect the rural character transition along the route. This is also a key consideration along Warwick Road, where any development would likely require substantial landscape enhancements along the adjacent boundary of the Site.
- 3.2.15 It is also the case that the existing pattern of development east of Dorridge and Knowle is in a northeasterly direction. In landscape terms, any necessity for housing development should be

contained by existing landscaping and restricted along the eastern extents of the settled area up to the Arden Academy. The Lansdowne parcel has its own specific landscape character constraints, and should development be required or acceptable here, it is considered that this would be low density designed to retain existing key landscape features and the 'parkland' type character, formed by the high proportion of TPO trees.

Local Landscape Character Assessment

- 3.2.16 The local landscape character assessment situation is summarised at Section 2.9 above, in relation to the proposed Site allocation. Whilst a detailed appraisal of the reported landscape findings has not been undertaken, it is considered that the relevant local landscape character assessment levels reported are generally applicable at a Site level.
- 3.2.17 The local landscape character sensitivity is reported as Medium, and this is considered fair. In particular the combination of tree and hedgerow cover combine to contain and limit the influence of the existing settled areas on the wider landscape beyond. The combination of vegetation and tree cover is critical to preserving this containment, breaking up any built form and ensuring mass development does not unduly influence the surrounding landscape. This particularly preserves the sense of rural urban transition along the Warwick Road and Grove Road.
- 3.2.18 The Landscape Visual Sensitivity is reported as Low. The general description is broadly accurate that the general visibility is short distance and low level where small scale fields and watercourses add intimacy. This is the defining characteristic of the Site and predominantly relates to the combination of landscape features, hedgerow and tree cover. These features are critical to preserving this intimacy and ensuring that any development does not unduly influence the surrounding area.
- 3.2.19 The Landscape Value is reported as Medium and that 'The wooded watercourses along with the ancient woodland are key to local distinctiveness'. Whilst the Site as a whole may be of a Medium landscape value, there are various areas of the Site which are considered higher value, in particular the Cuttle Brook and adjacent scrub and woodland cover, as well as the 'parkland' type of landscape and TPO cover around Lansdowne House, which needs to be respected by development and also subject to management.
- 3.2.20 It is considered that the assessed local landscape capacity of Low for the local character area is appropriate and is applicable across the Site. There are two key considerations to this:
- The Site is considered able to accommodate small areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness; [Underline our emphasis]
 - Development should not lead to the loss of irreplaceable habitats and should preserve the setting of the Knowle Conservation Area.
- 3.2.21 The key landscape considerations at a Site level relate to the TPO trees and historic tree cover, Cuttle Brook, 'parkland' type landscape elements and boundary hedgerow and tree cover. These features all combine to provide varying and localise distinctiveness across the Site, also contrasting with the wider arable landscape further east of Warwick Road.
- 3.2.22 Equally, Knowle Conservation Area is in close proximity and opposite the Arden Academy and Warwick Road is a main route from the south towards the Conservation Area and the management and treatment of the proposed allocation Site area is potentially integral to the perception of the

setting of the Conservation Area along key transport routes. This aspect should be considered in further detail.

- 3.2.23 Overall, it is considered the overall landscape capacity for housing is Low within the Site, where discreet areas of development may be acceptable so long as they are of an appropriate scale and density and the intrinsic and higher value landscape elements within the Site are protected. This is important both in terms of the inherent landscape characteristics as well as integrating any proposals.
- 3.2.24 Owing to the discreet field pattern within the Site and preservation of important landscape features, development proposals need to reflect lower density of housing with distance away from the settled area and this need to be considered in both a north-south and east-west orientation.

3.3 GREEN BELT SUMMARY CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.3.1 Consideration of Green Belt is a separate planning consideration from landscape and visual amenity considerations, but there are pertinent landscape and visual considerations that inform impacts on Green Belt. These are summarised below, pending any further assessment on Green Belt impacts.
- 3.3.2 Given the scale and nature of the Site, the Site if wholly developed would constitute a very large encroachment in to the Green Belt, beyond the existing easterly settlement limits of Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath. Whilst the Warwick Road and to a lesser Grove Road, could be considered defensible boundaries, they do not particularly bound the existing settled area in the locality and development would constitute a large encroachment beyond the pre-existing settlement limits.
- 3.3.3 Whilst recognising that the areas of Dorridge, Bentley Heath and Knowle have generally merged to form a partly homogenous settled area, given the scale of the Site, further detailed consideration is needed to understand the importance of the Site in terms of preserving the setting of the individual areas and their relative identity to each other. Such a level of encroachment is generally considered to further erode the individual identities of the settled areas or 'towns' and in particular further merge areas of Knowle in to a much large settled area, linking Knowle directly to Dorridge. This may be particularly important in respect of the setting of the Knowle Conservation Area.
- 3.3.4 Whilst it is recognised that the combination of mature/high hedgerow cover and tree cover combine to limit views of the Site from further Green Belt areas east of Warwick Road and further afield, such as towards the Grand Union Canal, this is reliant on retention of the vast majority of tree cover. Any substantial tree removal would open up views and increase the influence of the Site (and any subsequent development) on the wider landscape.
- 3.3.5 The easterly facing slopes in the southern half of the Site are also visible from the Warwick Road and potentially at greater distance to the far south and from along the Grand Union Canal to the east. Due to the level of existing tree cover there is very limited appreciation of the nearby settlement limits and as such, any development across the Site would potentially encroach in to views and influence the wider green belt openness by allowing development well beyond the existing eastern settlement limits. Significant improvements to buffer planting and landscaping along the Warwick Road would be needed to visually contain development.
- 3.3.6 Further to this, the existing pattern and orientation of development, such as newer development at Barton Drive, does not illustrate an easterly pattern of sprawl. The existing alignment of the new built development shows a northeasterly encroachment across the Green Belt towards Knowle and the Warwick Road, the southeasterly limit of which would most likely be determined by the existing

footpath crossing the Site, being to the north of the Lansdowne Farm. As such current patterns of sprawl are not considered to indicate or justify easterly encroachment along and north of Grove Road. This is illustrated at drawing CE-KN1359-DW03 (Appendix L2)

- 3.3.7 It is noted that the Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment July 2016, identified the Site in Green Belt as part of parcel RP39. This was identified as a lower or moderately important parcel in relation to Green Belt. Its highest score (2 out of 3) related to Purpose 3 – protecting the countryside from encroachment. All other scores for other purposes were 1.
- 3.3.8 It is considered that given the scale of the parcel in relation to the existing settled area, the land itself serves a stronger purpose in preventing urban sprawl, there needs to be further detailed consideration in terms of how Dorridge, Bentley Heath and Knowle are considered as individual settlements or ‘towns’, with individual character in their own rights (notwithstanding existing merging that has occurred) and also further consideration of the importance of the Site and the Warwick Road corridor to preserving the setting of the Knowle Conservation Area which was considered an important aspect in relation to the Hampton Road proposed allocations (in terms of retaining a rural-urban transition).

3.4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.4.1 Overall, the Site as a proposed housing (and mixed use) allocation has a number of important and highly sensitive landscape features that require protection, in particular the extensive hedgerow and tree cover at the Site, Cuttle Brook and the ‘parkland’ type features around Lansdowne House. These also contribute to significant green infrastructure on the edge of the settled area surrounding the discreet field parcels.
- 3.4.2 The landscape character of the southern half of the Site is considered to be highly sensitive and have a low capacity for development. The Lansdowne parcel also has a number of highly sensitive landscape elements which combine to provide a locally distinctive landscape character. These warrant further detailed consideration. Generally, it is considered landscape capacity reduces in an easterly and a southerly direction across the Site.
- 3.4.3 The retention of and supplementation of additional landscaping is considered to be a key consideration to ensuring a transitional rural character is retained along Warwick Road and Grove Road.
- 3.4.4 Notwithstanding the commentary above, it would appear that the Solihull MBC would prefer to allocate the Arden Triangle as a single proposed allocation. Due to the varying landownerships, different land parcels are being promoted separately. This may lead to differing approaches towards land in the north of the Site and to the south of the Site.
- 3.4.5 It is noted that Solihull MBC have presented in the latest local plan consultation proposals, two masterplan options and it is considered that no informed decision can be made on housing numbers, densities and development proposals without this overarching masterplanning process, given the landscape, visual and green belt considerations (amongst other planning considerations). This process should establish the acceptability of any environmental effects and how this is likely to influence landscape character and other factors. This process should also consider visual influence of the proposals in more detail, particularly during winter.
- 3.4.6 There is also uncertainty relating to which parcels of land will come forward at which points, given the varying landownerships. Without a phased masterplanning process the following key landscape and visual aspects cannot be properly accounted for on a Site of this scale, including:

- **Cumulative constraints** – differing land parcels being delivered with separate proposals outside of a masterplan proposal risks a number of significant cumulative effects which may lead to bad design, a lack of sustainability or adverse environmental implications which may prejudice the delivery of the wider Site or fail to achieve the desired housing and environmental outcomes.
- **Inappropriate phasing of development** – without an appropriate masterplan strategy, noting the differing landowners, differing parts of the Site could be promoted at differing times. This may lead to an unacceptable development strategy for the Site, with adverse design implications and failure to fully protect the important landscape characteristics of the Site.

3.4.7 Regardless of the masterplanning process, given the intrinsic landscape value associated with boundary hedgerows within the Site and wider tree cover, **these elements should be protected and a landscape and green infrastructure strategy developed for the Site in advance clearly demarcating the retention of such features to inform the developable extent of the Site.** This should then be collated alongside green and open space requirements in relation to any development proposals to ensure an integrated landscape led design approach.

3.4.8 An area based summary of the various constraints and development considerations across the Site has been shown at Plan ref CE-KN1359-DW03 (Appendix L2). From this and the commentary above, the following key considerations are highlighted:

- To account for landscape and visual considerations and the Green Belt context ensuring any development is contained and does not lead to further encroachment, development would need to be phased in an easterly direction, with higher density development closer to the existing settlement edge and any development further east being of a progressively lower density.
- It is not considered appropriate to develop the Site in such a way which leads to pockets of high density development scattered across the Site. It would also be inappropriate and likely lead to unsatisfactory development if there were separate allocations across the Site. As such, it is considered the southern areas of the Site would be unacceptable to develop in isolation, in landscape and settlement character terms without development in the northern and western areas of the Site. Generally, with reference to plan DW03, it would be anticipated that any development in Area 2, would be reliant on Area 1 proposals coming forward and that Area 3 would only have development potential if Areas 1 and 2 were developed.
- With reference to plan DW03, Area 4 south of the brook has limited, if any, development potential. The Cuttle Brook corridor needs to be protected and retained and by virtue of this, means that any development between the brook and Grove Road would become potentially disparate and would poorly relate to the wider settled area. It is also noted that the pre-existing development character along Grove Road is that of large scale houses (and gardens) in ribbon development form. More substantial or denser housing proposals would be out of character for local context along Grove Road, noting that the route also promotes the rural urban transition towards Dorridge.
- Green infrastructure at the Site should be protected and enhanced, particularly the ‘parkland’ character at Lansdowne and the Cuttle Brook corridor. The intrinsic character around Lansdowne House is similar to that of the wider landscape to the northeast and is a key to the rural transition on the approach to Knowle and the associate Conservation Area.

3.4.9 Overall, it is considered that there are limited landscape and visual constraints which would prevent an appropriately designed scheme being proposed across the Arden Academy parcel and the

associate playing and sports fields to the south comprising the western extents of Site and extending northwards from Barton Drive. If an appropriate design process identifies a scheme can be accommodated, this should form the initial phase of development for the Site.

- 3.4.10 Beyond this, the existing treelines and hedgerow boundaries at the eastern edge of the fields and parcels would form a defensible green belt boundary and an acceptable limit to settlement extents.
- 3.4.11 It is considered, given the existing pattern of ‘urban sprawl’ and settlement extents, that any further encroachment eastwards across the Site would significantly extend the settlement limits, increase the level of settlement or ‘town’ merging between Dorridge, Knowle and Bentley Heath and would lose a significant amount of countryside, of relatively high landscape value with some locally distinct landscape elements.
- 3.4.12 Should further land release be required, this should focus on the areas at and north of the Lansdowne parcel; however, housing densities are likely to be reduced to protect the areas of TPO trees which have helped to provide a locally distinctive landscape structure in conjunction with other ‘garden’ landscape elements will require careful incorporation in to the overall design.
- 3.4.13 Based on this, the footpath route through the centre of the Site would form a natural limit to development in conjunction with retained boundary vegetation and trees.
- 3.4.14 It is unclear at this stage if development can be successfully achieved in the southern half of the Site which would avoid significant adverse landscape effects and that would relate well spatially to the wider Site and settled area. Development of small field units disparate from wider developed areas would potentially fragment the landscape character to significant and unacceptable levels. This requires more detailed consideration in the context of a wider masterplanning and phasing plan strategy.
- 3.4.15 With reference to SMBC Illustrative Masterplan Options (see Plates 3 and 4), they in part respond to the intrinsic landscape and visual characteristics of the Site and the considerations reported above. They also indicate that based on this process, the housing aspirations have been reduced from 750 dwellings to 600 dwellings. However, in both Masterplan Options, a number of key landscape and visual considerations remain that need to be further addressed, namely in relation to the southern half of the Site.

Summary Response to Masterplan Options

- 3.4.16 The proposed development areas north of Grove Road are indicated as ‘Low’ density. These areas are discreet and separated from the main settled areas of Dorridge and development proposals to the north, by Cuttle Brook and “areas of significant ecological value”. It should be clarified what is intended by ‘Low’ density, noting that Grove Road itself comprises ribbon development of large scale houses only. It is considered that at this stage there is limited justification for development north of Grove Road as this would poorly relate to the existing settled area and wider development proposals. The development proposals may also further constrain and restrict landscape connectivity between the Cuttle Brook and wider landscape.
- 3.4.17 Further to this, of the four main accesses, two are located at Grove Road. Given the ‘Low’ density housing proposals along Grove Road, this indicates that development south of the Cuttle Brook may be used to facilitate access to the north of Cuttle Brook, with crossings across the brook and areas of significant ecological value. It is not clear from the masterplans if this is the intention. Noting the medium density development proposals to the north, the combination of these proposals may further conflict with the Cuttle Brook as a green infrastructure corridor, leading to

greater landscape and visual effects than may be indicated by the masterplan proposals. As such, the access locations should be reviewed in more detail to ensure environmental acceptability and transparency in how the various development areas will be serviced.

- 3.4.18 Medium density housing is proposed between Cuttle Brook and the footpath through the Site (south of Lansdowne House). Firstly, it is considered that there should be a wider buffer to any development north of Cuttle Brook and this is a missed opportunity to provide a green infrastructure corridor both north and south of the brook. Secondly, it is unclear how the boundary treatment with the Warwick Road will be protected and enhanced. It is considered that a wider landscape buffer is required fronting the Warwick Road, noting the rural/urban transition experienced along this route and the importance of visually containing and screening proposals from the east.
- 3.4.19 Thirdly, the development areas, owing to the various landscape compartments and green infrastructure corridors, do appear more isolated from the wider development area proposals to the north, which better relate to the existing settled areas. Showing all of the development areas south of the footpath as Medium density shows limited consideration of a gradation to lower density housing in an easterly direction towards the Warwick Road or southerly direction towards Cuttle Brook. This should be reconsidered, as generic medium density development may appear isolated from the wider settled area, forming a discreet housing area. It is considered that lower density housing, or a gradation to lower density housing in an easterly and southerly direction across the parcel, would help to better relate the development proposals to the wider development and settled area aspirations, as well as acting to limit and contain development at the Warwick Road and Cuttle Brook, which would better respect the local landscape and Green Belt context.
- 3.4.20 The masterplan process should clarify how development areas south of Milverton Road (north of the Site) will accommodate medium density housing (including access provisions), whilst retaining the intrinsic landscape character and important landscape features, specifically the parkland type elements of TPOs and scattered woodlands. The existing landscape and treeline buffer fronting the Warwick Road should be protected and enhanced and this should be made clear on the masterplan.
- 3.4.21 Overall, a continued iterative masterplan process for the Site, which accounts for the intrinsic landscape and visual considerations (and wider environmental aspects), inclusive of detailed public liaison, is recommended prior allocation in the local plan to ensure any masterplan proposals for the locality are detailed and realistic, such that significant adverse landscape and visual impacts can be avoided.
- 3.4.22 We would also recommend that representations are made requesting that Solihull MBC make any allocation for the Arden Triangle subject to a **Supplementary Planning Document or Design Code** to inform development, to be consulted on with KDBH Neighbourhood Forum. Planning policy should also require that any application be accompanied by detailed Green Infrastructure requirements, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and a Lighting Assessment (especially in relation to flood lighting). Any flood lighting in particular, given the Site location and landform, can exert an influence external to the Site on the wider landscape character and tranquillity afforded. The necessity of such development aspects should be considered in advance of any allocation and where necessary designed and assessed upfront. This should also inform the effectiveness and sustainability of any Green Infrastructure both in terms of day and night time effects, which may be important factors to a number a wildlife species.
- 3.4.23 The NPPF makes clear that in preparing local plans the Councils evidence base and Sustainability

Appraisal “should demonstrate how the plan has addressed relevant economic, social and environmental objectives (including opportunities for net gains). **Significant adverse impacts on these objectives should be avoided and, wherever possible, alternative options which reduce or eliminate such impacts should be pursued.** Where significant adverse impacts are unavoidable, suitable mitigation measures should be proposed (or, where this is not possible, compensatory measures should be considered)”. [Underline our emphasis]

3.4.24 In the case of the Arden Triangle, there are a number of aspects which are considered to require more detailed consideration, which may need to inform the implementation of detailed protection measures or planning policy requirements.

3.4.25 Other important NPPF considerations are summarised below [Underline our emphasis]:

- ***Achieving well-designed places*** - The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities... Plans should, at the most appropriate level, **set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable...** To provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage, **plans or supplementary planning documents should use visual tools such as design guides and codes.**
- ***Protection Green Belt Land*** - The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; **the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.**
- ***Conserving and enhancing the natural environment*** - Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan); b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland... Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; **allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value,** where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.
- ***Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*** - an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. **Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.**

APPENDICES

Appendix L1 – Illustrative Photographs

Appendix L2 – Drawings