



BROWNSOVER ROAD, RUGBY

LANDSCAPE & VISUAL APPRAISAL

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION 1

2. POLICY AND GUIDANCE 2

3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER 14

4. VISUAL CONTEXT 18

5. SITE ANALYSIS AND LANDSCAPE / VISUAL MITIGATION 20

6. INTEGRATED LANDSCAPE STRATEGY 23

7. CONCLUSION 25

APPENDICES

A. Baseline figures.....

B. Viewpoint photographs

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Following a request from St Modwen Homes, Bradley Murphy Design Ltd. (BMD) has undertaken a high-level Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) in relation to the land off Brownsover Road, Rugby. The area of study (referred to as the 'Site') focused on the triangular shaped land enclosed by Brownsover Road, the Oxford Canal and the Viaduct Cycleway, as shown on **Figure 1 Site Location and Study Area** at **Appendix A**.

1.1.2 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal Technical Note was prepared by Yu Yang CMLI from Bradley Murphy Design Ltd, a chartered landscape architect, with 15 years' experience in private practice.

1.1.3 The aim of the LVA reported in this Technical Note is to assess the suitability of the Site for development, with regard to its landscape and visual sensitivities, and to identify recommendations for sensitively integrating the development into the Site and its surrounding landscape and visual context.

1.1.4 A brief review of the following documents has been undertaken to understand, define and record the context, character, setting and sensitivity of the Site, in order to inform a landscape-led masterplan for the Site:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (updated 2023)
- Rugby Borough Council, Local Plan 2011-2031, adopted 2019
- Warwickshire Landscape Character and Guidelines, 1993
- Landscape Assessment of the Borough of Rugby Sensitivity and Condition Study, 2006
- West Midlands Joint Green Belt Review Study, 2015
- Warwickshire, Coventry, and Solihull Green Infrastructure Strategy, 2013

2. POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Overview

- 2.1.1 This section provides a summary of the planning policy relevant to landscape and visual issues. A detailed review has been undertaken of all relevant policy and guidance at a national, regional, and local level, as illustrated on **Figure 4: Planning Policies and Environmental Designations** at **Appendix A**.

National Context

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – updated on December 2023, sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and provides a framework within which the appropriate local council can produce local and neighbourhood plans; the NPPF is material consideration in making planning decisions.
- 2.1.3 The NPPF sets out three dimensions to achieve sustainable development that are economic, social and environmental considerations. High quality design and local character are repeating themes through the core planning principles. The NPPF also notes the importance that design ‘evolves’ in response to local issues and to the view of local communities and also sets out principles in relation to conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. The following chapters are of relevance to this landscape and visual appraisal:
- Chapter 2: Achieving sustainable development
 - Chapter 3: Plan-making Strategic policies
 - Chapter 12: achieving well-designed places
 - Chapter 13: Protecting Green Belt land
 - Chapter 14: meeting the change of climate change, flooding and coastal change planning for climate change
 - Chapter 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Local Planning Policy

Rugby Borough Council, Local Plan 2011-2031, adopted 2019

- 2.1.4 The Local Plan describes the type of place Rugby Borough is today and the type of place it aspires to be in the future, providing a framework to manage that change and growth until 2031. The relevant policies are listed below and illustrated on **Figure 4 Planning Policies and Environmental Designations** at **Appendix A**.

- Policy GP1: Securing Sustainable Development states that:

When considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.

- Policy HS1: Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities states that:

The potential for creating healthy, safe and inclusive communities will be taken into account when considering all development proposals. Support will be given to proposals which (amongst others):

- *Contribute to the development of a high quality, safe and convenient walking and cycling network;*
- *Contribute to a high quality, attractive and safe public realm to encourage social interaction and facilitate movement on foot and by bicycle;*
- *Seek to encourage healthy lifestyles by providing opportunities for formal and informal physical activity, exercise, recreation and play and, where possible, healthy diets;*
- *Improve the quality and quantity of green infrastructure networks and protect and enhance physical access, including public rights of way to open space.*

- Policy HS4: Open Space, Sports facilities and recreation states that:

Residential development of 10 dwellings and above, shall provide or contribute towards the attainment of the Council's open space standards (see table at paragraph 2.1.5).

- Policy NE1: Protecting Designated Biodiversity and Geodiversity Assets states that:

The council will protect designated areas and species of international, national and local importance for biodiversity and geodiversity.

- Policy NE2: Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure states that:

The Council will work with partners towards the creation of a comprehensive Borough wide Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure Network... This will be achieved through:

- *The protection, restoration and enhancement of existing and potential Green and Blue Infrastructure assets within the network as shown on the Policies Map;*
- *The introduction of appropriate multi-functional corridors between existing and potential Green and Blue Infrastructure assets.*

Where appropriate, new developments must provide suitable Green and Blue Infrastructure corridors throughout, linking into adjacent strategic and local Green and Blue Infrastructure or assets where present.

- Policy NE3: Landscape Protection and Enhancement states that:

New development which positively contributes to landscape character will be permitted. Development proposals will be required to demonstrate that they:

- *Integrate landscape planning into the design of development at an early stage;*
- *Consider its landscape context, including the local distinctiveness of the different natural and historic landscapes and character, including tranquillity;*
- *Relate well to local topography and built form and enhance key landscape features, ensuring their long term management and maintenance;*
- *Identify likely visual impacts on the local landscape and townscape and its immediate setting and undertakes appropriate landscaping to reduce these impacts;*
- *Aims to either conserve, enhance or restore important landscape features in accordance with the latest local and national guidance;*
- *Address the importance of habitat biodiversity features, including aged and veteran trees, woodland and hedges and their contribution to landscape character, where possible enhancing and expanding these features through means such as buffering and reconnecting fragmented areas;*
- *Are sensitive to an area's capacity to change, acknowledge cumulative effects and guard against the potential for coalescence between existing settlements.*

- Policy SDC1: Sustainable Design states that:

All development will demonstrate high quality, inclusive and sustainable design and new development will only be supported where the proposals are of a scale, density and design that responds to the character of the areas in which they are situated. All developments should aim to add to the overall quality of the areas in which they situated.

Factors including the massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access should also be a key consideration in the determination of planning application.

- Policy SDC2: Landscaping states that:

The landscape aspects of a development proposal will be required to form an integral part of the overall design. A high standard of appropriate hard and soft landscaping will be required. All proposals should ensure that:

- *Important site features have been identified for retention through a detailed site survey;*
- *Features of ecological, geological and archaeological significance are retained and protected and opportunities for enhancing these features are utilised (consideration will also be given to the requirements of policies NE1 and SDC3 where relevant);*
- *Opportunities for utilising sustainable drainage methods are incorporated;*
- *New planting comprises native species which are of ecological value appropriate to the area;*
- *In appropriate cases, there is sufficient provision for planting within and around the perimeter of the site to minimise visual intrusion on neighbouring uses or the countryside;*
- *Detailed arrangements are incorporated for the long-term management and maintenance of landscape features.*
- Policy SDC3: Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment states that:

Development will be supported that sustains and enhances the significance of the Borough's heritage assets including listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens, archaeology, historic landscapes and townscapes.
- Policy SDC6: Sustainable Drainage states that:

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are required in all major developments and all development in flood zones 2 and 3. The SuDS should (amongst others):

 - *Be designed to integrate with Green and/or infrastructure functions;*
 - *Promote enhanced biodiversity;*
 - *Increase landscape value;*
 - *Provide good quality open spaces.*

Open Space Requirements

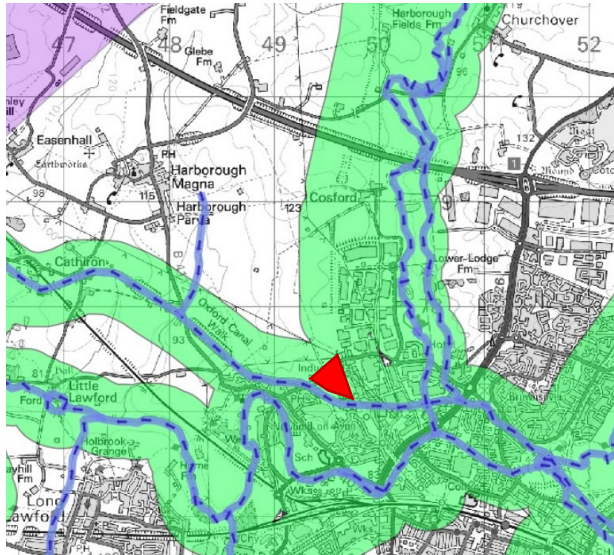
- 2.1.5 The Rugby Borough Council Local Plan, Policy HS4 Open Space, Sports Facilities and Recreation, requires residential development of 10 dwellings and above to provide or contribute towards the attainment of the Council's open space standards set out below. The Site is currently located within the area defined as Rural Area in the Local Plan Policies Map. The projected population for development is calculated based on 140-160 homes with an average of 2.4 persons occupancy rate. The total Site area is 8.27 hectares with the net developable area proposed as 4.6 hectares, offering c.3.67 hectares multifunctional open space (accommodating public open space as set out below, along with opportunities for optimising Biodiversity Net Gain).

Open Space Typology	Provision policy requirement (ha/1000 population)	Provision required (ha/1000 population), based on 140 homes	Provision required (ha/1000 population), based on 160 homes
Children's Play	0.2	0.07	0.08
Natural & Semi-natural green space	2.5	0.84	0.96
Parks and Gardens	1.5	0.50	0.58
Amenity green space	1.1	0.37	0.42
Allotment	0.65	0.22	0.25
Outdoor Sports Playing pitches			
Football Pitches	0.38	0.13	0.15
Cricket Pitches	0.23	0.08	0.09
Rugby Pitches	0.32	0.11	0.12
Total:			
Open Space required	6.88 hectares	2.32 hectares	2.65 hectares

Green Infrastructure Strategy Review and Recommendation

- 2.1.6 The Rugby Borough Council Local Plan, Green Infrastructure Policies Map indicates the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network within the Rugby administrative boundary. The extracted plan below shows the location of the Site and its association with the wider green infrastructure network along the Oxford Canal and the western edge of the Glebe Farm Industrial Estate.

Extract of the Local Plan Green Infrastructure Policies Map



2.1.7 Policy NE2 of the Rugby Local Plan states that where appropriate new developments must provide suitable Green and Blue Infrastructure corridors throughout, linking into adjacent strategic and local Green and Blue Infrastructure networks or assets where present. Where such provision is made a framework plan should be produced to demonstrate the contribution to the overall achievements of the multi-functional strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure network. The framework plan should be informed by the GI Study and factor in the following:

- Indicative buffers for important Green and / or Blue Infrastructure corridors which form part of the strategic networks such as watercourse corridors and disused railway lines
- Indicative buffers where required to protect important Green / Blue Infrastructure against adjacent developments
- Retain valued semi natural habitats
- Set out the local network of Green / Blue Infrastructure and how it will be managed and developed

2.1.8 The Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Sub-Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy (Warwickshire Museum and Natural Environment, 2013) provides further details on elements that can be applied at a local and field level. The following recommendations are relevant to the Site, its immediate context and potential development proposals:

- Enhance the structure of the landscape through replanting and regeneration of primary hedgerow boundaries

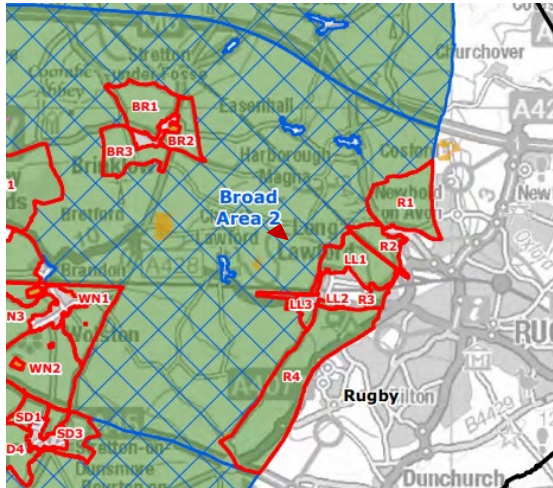
- Reintroduce mixed native species hedgerows along primary boundaries
- Enhance the age structure of hedgerow tree cover, particularly hedgerow oaks
- Identify opportunities for new tree planting, to strengthen the sense of landscape cohesion and connectivity
- Maintain and restore areas of older permanent pasture, including ridge and furrow meadows
- Conserve the ecological character of wet grasslands
- Identify opportunities for sensitive grassland management, to strengthen the sense of landscape cohesion and connectivity
- Maintain the special character and continuity of river and canal corridors
- Identify opportunities to strengthen 'local distinctiveness' and a 'sense of place'
- Identify opportunities for new tree planting to soften the impact of buildings and 'grey' infrastructure
- Landscape character assessment to be a major consideration at the inception, planning and design of all major development and infrastructure projects
- Green Infrastructure provision and development should strengthen landscape character, reflecting locally distinctive natural and cultural landscape patterns, and integrating with natural processes and systems and land-use changes, contributing to their long-term protection, conservation and enhancement management
- Opportunities should be sought to reinforce and enhance landscape character, by creating new and maintaining existing Green Infrastructure, linking urban areas with the wider countryside. For example, this could include establishing new community woodlands and wildflower meadows

Green Belt Review - Joint Green Belt Study, 2015

- 2.1.9 A Joint Green Belt Study was produced by LUC in 2015 on behalf of six West Midlands councils (Coventry City Council, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Rugby Borough Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council). The study assessed the Green Belt against the five purposes set out in the National Planning Policy Framework at that time.
- 2.1.10 The Methodology of the Joint Green Belt Study is set out in its Chapter 3. Stage 1 studies the Green Belt within Coventry City Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Rugby Borough Council and Warwick Borough Council. Green Belt land adjacent to the Stage 1 main settlements for these authorities, was divided into broad areas and land parcels for assessment. As illustrated on the extract plan below, the Site forms a very small proportion of assessment Parcel R1 (located outside Broad Area 2 and on the

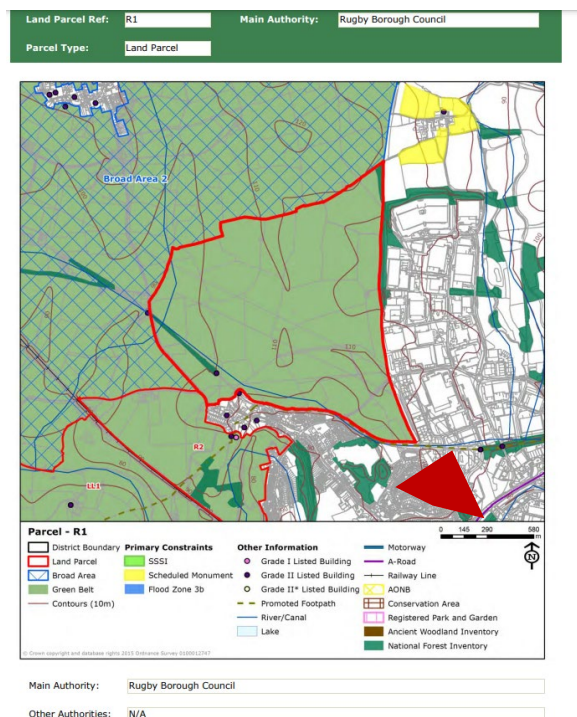
settlement edge of Rugby), located to the very south eastern corner of the parcel, comprising a piece of land nestled into the north west edge of Rugby.

Extract of Joint Green Belt Study



- 2.1.11 Each parcel was assessed against the Green Belt review criteria presented in Table 3.2 in Chapter 3 of the 2015 Study, with findings summarised in its Chapter 4 and judgement included at its Appendix 1 and 2.

Extract of the R1 constraints plan at the 2015 Study Appendix 2



- 2.1.12 The Site only forms a very small part of this Parcel and is well contained by the adjacent built form of the Glebe Farm Industrial Estate to the east and the residential area of Newbold on Avon to the south west.

Therefore, the Site is considered likely to make a much lower contribution to the Green Belt, when compared to the wider areas of Parcel R1.

- 2.1.13 The Table below contains the detailed assessment for Parcel R1, taken from the Joint Green Belt Study, along with a specific assessment for the Site undertaken by BMD, using the same methodology from the Joint Green Belt Study.

PURPOSE		Joint Green Belt Study of Parcel R1	BMD Assessment of the Site
Purpose 1 – to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.	Issue 1a – Ribbon development	<p><i>Score: 1</i></p> <p><i>The parcel plays some role in preventing ribbon development along the eastern side of Harborough Road.</i></p>	<p>Score: 0</p> <p>The Site is located on the edge of the designated Green Belt, with the existing settlement of Rugby abutting the eastern and southern edges and influencing the character in this part of the Green Belt. The Site is considered as an 'infill' are to the settlement. Therefore, the Site plays no role in creating ribbon development.</p>
	Issue 1b - Openness	<p><i>Score: 2</i></p> <p><i>With the exception of two small and isolated agricultural sheds and two lines of pylons running through the parcel, the land within the parcel is open and free from woodland and development. These developments are not considered to compromise the openness of Green Belt land within their immediate vicinity.</i></p>	<p>Score: 1</p> <p>The Site is tucked between adjacent areas of the existing settlement, with undulating topography combining with adjacent areas of settlement to limit the sense of openness.</p>
Purpose 2 – to prevent neighbouring towns merging	Issue 2a – Location of parcel and distance between	<p><i>Score: 2</i></p> <p><i>Measured from the westernmost point of Rugby's urban edge, the village of Cathiron lies roughly 1.5km to</i></p>	<p>Score: 0</p> <p>Due to the infill nature of the Site, the existing settlement edges of Rugby would lies closer to any</p>

PURPOSE		Joint Green Belt Study of Parcel R1	BMD Assessment of the Site
into one another	neighbouring settlements	<i>the north west. Measured along the B4112 from the same point, the village of Harborough Magna lies roughly 1.8km from the urban edge of Rugby.</i>	other nearby settlement that the closest boundary (in any direction) of the Site. Therefore, the Site plays no role in preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another.
Purpose 3 – to assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment	Issue 3a – Significance of existing urbanising influences	<p>Score: 2</p> <p><i>With the exception of two small and isolated agricultural sheds and two lines of pylons running through the parcel, the land within the parcel is open and free from woodland and development. The developments are common in the countryside and are not considered to urbanise the rural character of the countryside. Furthermore, the developments are not considered to compromise the openness of Green Belt land within their immediate vicinity.</i></p>	<p>Score: 1</p> <p>The character of the Site is considered to be urban edge, rather than open countryside, given the urbanising influence of the adjacent Glebe Farm Industrial Estate and residential area of Newbold on Avon. These urbanising influences substantially compromise the countryside character and openness in this part of the Green Belt.</p>
	Issue 3b – Significance of boundaries / features to contain development and prevent encroachment	<p>Score: 2</p> <p><i>The Oxford Canal runs through the parcel close to its southern edge, helping to prevent encroachment of the countryside to the south west; however, portions of the canal are underground, limiting the role of this boundary in helping to prevent encroachment of the countryside. There are no significant boundaries within or immediately beyond the parcel which contribute to protecting</i></p>	<p>Score: 1</p> <p>The topography of the Site and vegetation along Brownsover Road provide a boundary feature with the potential to be reinforced to form a strong edge to the Green Belt and contain further encroachment.</p>

PURPOSE		Joint Green Belt Study of Parcel R1	BMD Assessment of the Site
		<i>the countryside from encroachment from Rugby.</i>	
Purpose 4 – to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Issue 4a – Parcel forms an historic and/or visual setting to the historic town	<p><i>Score 2:</i></p> <p><i>The parcel does not overlap with a Conservation Area within an historic town. However, there is good intervisibility with the historic core of Rugby which lies to the south east of the parcel.</i></p>	<p>Score: 0</p> <p>There are no historic towns with the potential to be influenced by development of the Site. With regard to areas with heritage value (Conservation Areas), the nearest are Old Brownsover and Rugby Town Centre Conservation Areas, which have no intervisibility with the Site (due to its low lying nature, which contrasts to the undulating nature of R1, where elevated parts have intervisibility with these Conservation Areas).</p>
Purpose 5 – to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Issue 5a – the need to incentivise development on derelict and other urban land within settlements	<p><i>Score: 4</i></p> <p><i>All Green Belt makes a strategic contribution to urban regeneration by restricting the land available for development and encouraging developers to seek out and recycle derelict / urban sites.... What can be said is that all parcels make an equally significant contribution to this purpose and are each given a score of 4.</i></p>	<p>Score: 4</p> <p>Agree with the Joint Green Belt Study</p>
Total		<i>Score: 15</i>	Score: 7

2.1.14 In summary, the Joint Green Belt Study states that Parcel R1 is assessed as a High Performing Green Belt Parcel and generally, such parcels are very open and largely free from development and urbanising influences. However, the Site does not share the same contribution to the Green Belt. The Site is well

enclosed by the surrounding built form, landform, and vegetation. The contribution the Site makes towards the openness of the Green Belt is very limited due to its 'infill' location. However, the Site does provide a great opportunity to reinstate the boundary of Green Belt by proposing a well-designed and robust green edge along Brownsover Road.

Moreover, the draft Publication Local Plan (2016) originally proposed removal of the Site from the Green Belt, stating that *"Land at Brownsover Road is not considered to serve the purpose of the Green Belt and this designation has therefore been removed and the Green Belt boundary amended accordingly as shown on the Policy Map."* This proposal was subsequently struck out, with the Council's reason stating *"Site not justified for release from Green Belt, therefore proposal deleted to ensure consistency with NPPF."* It is not clear why the Council considered there was no justification, as the review set out in the table above also concludes that the Site provides a low contribution to the Green Belt purposes. However, the Inspector's Report confirms at paragraph 215 that *"the parcel of land is [not] required to meet objectively assessed development needs of the borough or the unmet needs of Coventry"*. It is therefore understood that the Inspector raised no concern with the principle of the Site's removal from the Green Belt, it was simply not required at the time to accommodate housing need.

3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Existing Landscape Character Baseline

Warwickshire Landscape Character and Guidelines 1993

- 3.1.1 This document defines the unique and distinctive landscapes of the area and provides invaluable strategies for managing and enhancing these landscapes.
- 3.1.2 As illustrated on **Figure 5 Landscape Character Areas** at **Appendix A**, the Site is located within the High Cross Plateau Landscape Character Area and subsequently in the Open Plateau Landscape Character Type. The High Cross Plateau is an area of wide rolling ridges and valleys, extending into Warwickshire between Rugby and Hinkley. Open Plateau is a remote rural landscape lying along the north eastern boundary of the county, between Rugby and Hinkley. The overall character and qualities include a large scale, open rolling landscape characterised by wide views and a strong impression of 'emptiness' and space. The characteristic features include:
- *A rolling plateau dissected by broad valleys*
 - *A medium to large scale, often poorly defined field pattern*
 - *A sparsely populated landscape of hamlets and isolated manor farmsteads*
 - *Deserted medieval village sites surrounded by extensive areas of 'empty' countryside*
 - *Pockets of permanent pasture often with ridge and furrow*
 - *Prominent belts of woodland*
- 3.1.3 The document provides the following recommendations for landscape management and guidelines:
- *Strengthen the structure and unity of the landscape through large scale woodland planting*
 - *Conserve and restore all primary hedgelines and manage them more positively as landscape features*
 - *Enhance the continuity and wooded character of river and stream corridors*
 - *Conserve and enhance tree cover within and around rural settlements*
 - *Enhance tree cover through large scale woodland planting on rising ground*
 - *New woodland planting should be predominantly broadleaved and favour oak with ash as the major tree species*

Landscape Assessment of the Borough of Rugby Sensitivity and Condition Study 2006

- 3.1.4 This study looks in more detail at the countryside around the urban fringe of Rugby itself. The aim of the study was to examine the character of the landscape around the town, its sensitivity to change, the condition of the countryside abutting Rugby's urban fringe and beyond, and to demonstrate how the outcomes could be used as a decision tool in the development planning process. The methodology adopted in this study involves three main components:
- a character analysis to establish what is appropriate in a particular landscape
 - a sensitivity analysis to define the degree to which a landscape can accept change
 - a condition / function analysis to define the need / opportunities for enhancement
- 3.1.5 The Site is located within the High Cross Plateau – Open Plateau as defined in the character analysis: *a remote, large scale, open, rolling plateau dissected by broad valleys, characterised, for the most part, by wide views and a strong impression of “emptiness” and space. Field pattern is generally medium to large in scale but is often poorly defined and tends to be a relatively minor element in this landscape, as the eye is naturally drawn to distant skylines rather than to foreground views.*
- 3.1.6 The overall sensitivity is rated as moderate. The Site is located within the eastern part of the Land Cover Parcel 33 (fieldwork in 2005) and is rated as a high in visual sensitivity. This means the potential that change is likely to cause a visual impact within a particular landscape. However, the area is rated low in both ecological and cultural sensitivity, given that: landscape does not have a clearly defined pattern, contains simple and limited habitats and is less sensitive to change. The condition of the landscape is defined as strong, combined with low level in nature and extent of land use change and intact functional field boundaries and other features.

Site and its Landscape Context

- 3.1.7 The Site is located to the northern urban edge of Rugby. It comprises a triangular shaped area of land, bound by the Oxford Canal to the south, the Viaduct Cycleway to the east and Brownsover Road to the north west. The Site extends to approximately 8.27 hectares. In the immediate context, on the opposite side of the Oxford Canal, the land uses include the existing residential settlement of Newbold, the Newbold Quarry Park / Nature Reserve and an area of designated allotment gardens. To the east of the Viaduct Cycleway, the land is occupied by the large scale buildings and infrastructure of the Glebe Farm Industrial Estate. To the north west of Brownsover Road, irregular shaped agricultural fields extend across undulating and rolling landform. The central and south west areas of the Site comprise three small scale pasture fields (labelled A, B and C in aerial photograph below) with the north and eastern parts of the Site comprising one linear arable field (D).



- 3.1.8 The Site is located on a rolling landform, with a localised plateau of c. 105m AOD along the northern and eastern parts of fields C and D. Fields A, B and C gently slope down towards the canal, to a level of c. 93m AOD.
- 3.1.9 The Site is not publicly accessible, albeit there are a number of public rights of way (PRoW) within the surrounding landscape. As illustrated on **Figure 3 Access and Water** and **Figure 6 Viewpoint Location Plan** at **Appendix A**, those adjacent to or in the near distance of the Site comprise:
- Bridleways 333/RB7/1, 333/RB8/1, and 162/R95/1
 - Off road cycle route - Viaduct Cycleway
 - Oxford Canal Walk - Long Distance Footpath
- 3.1.10 Vegetation on and in the vicinity of the Site comprises:
- Mature hedgerows with trees forming the boundaries between fields A, B, C & D
 - A continuous line of overgrown hedgerow and scrub along the eastern boundary with the Viaduct Cycleway, with more substantial scrub and trees along the eastern side of the cycleway and boundary with the industrial estate
 - Mature hedgerow along both sides of Brownsover Road, containing trees along the north west boundary of the Site
 - Dense scrub and woodland along the eastern part of the southern boundary with the Oxford Canal, with the western part of this boundary remaining open to the northern part of the canal, albeit with further woodland and scrub along the southern parts of the canal, reducing to a tall hedgerow with trees along the residential area adjacent to the canal

- 3.1.11 The Site is not located within any landscape related designation. Based on the Local Plan Urban Policies Map, to the immediate south of the Oxford Canal, Newbold Quarry Park is a designated Local Wildlife Site. The Church of St Botolph is a Grade I listed building, which is located over 720m to the west of the Site. Close to the church, there are a number of other Grade II listed buildings, albeit these lie within the settlement of Newbold on Avon. To the east, the Rugby Arm Bridge and Rugby Aqueduct are both Grade II listed buildings, albeit these lie at a distance of over 430m to the Site. The intervisibility between the Site and all of these listed buildings is barely perceptible, due to the extent of intervening built form, rolling landform and mature vegetation.
- 3.1.12 As illustrated on **Figure 7** at **Appendix A**, the Oxford Canal forms a distinctive feature along the Site's southern boundary. Walking along the towing path from west to east, the character changes from Urban Residential Moorings to an Urban Fenced Edge, then a tranquil Urban Park Edge (where it meets the Newbold Quarry Park) and finally to a Wooded Enclosure that is formed by the high embankment and mature vegetation flanking the canal.

4. VISUAL CONEXT

- 4.1.1 The Site is visually well contained by surrounding built form and extensive vegetation to the south and east, along with topography and layering of field boundary vegetation to the north west. The nearest and most open views of the Site are from the western part of the southern boundary along the Oxford Canal Walk, as represented **Viewpoints 1a** and **1b** at **Appendix B**. Slightly south of the canal, residents occupying properties off Pantolf Place experience filtered views of the Site. Within Newbold Quarry Park, there are views of the Site from a small plateau, as represented by **Viewpoint 6**, whilst the Site is not visible from the majority of the paths and walkways within the wider park, due to the lower level and extent of intervening vegetation around the lake and park, as illustrated by **Viewpoint 5**.
- 4.1.2 Beyond the eastern part of the southern boundary, views of the Site from the Oxford Canal Walk and nearby properties are screened by the existing embankment and vegetation flanking the canal, as represented by **Viewpoint 1c**. Existing vegetation to the western side of Viaduct Cycleway provides a strong screening and / or heavily filtered views from this public route towards the Site, as represented by **Viewpoints 2** and **3**. Further east, the industrial estate lies at a lower level than the Viaduct Cycleway, with a dense belt of scrub and tree planting along its perimeter substantially limiting views into the Site.
- 4.1.3 **Viewpoint 4** represents views from Brownsover Road, which are largely filtered by the Site's boundary vegetation comprising hedgerow and belt of trees. Beyond Brownsover Road, the vegetation is relatively sparse and comprises mainly field boundary hedgerow with occasional hedgerow trees and gappy tree belts. Together with rolling topography and a gentle elevation heading north, there are many panoramic views of the northern settlement edge of Rugby from PRoW on these relatively elevated areas, as represented by **Viewpoints 7** and **8**. However, views of the Site itself are limited (or form a small proportion of the view, which is partly influenced by the settlement of Rugby and large industrial units) due to the combination of the overall sloping landform towards the canal, the vegetation along Brownsover Road and tree belts to the immediate north of the Site.
- 4.1.4 Overall, the visual receptors that have potential for direct, open, and near distance views of potential development on the Site (similar in scale / form to this context) include:
- Walkers using the Oxford Canal Walk – Long Distance Footpath, in close proximity to the south western edge of the Site
 - A small number of residents occupying properties along Pantolf Place, where they are not filtered by existing vegetation
- 4.1.5 Other receptors with the potential for filtered, heavily filtered and distant views of residential development on the Site (similar in scale / form to this context) include users of:
- Walkers using the Oxford Canal Walk – Long Distance Footpath, approaching from the east and west, experiencing filtered views through the canal edge vegetation

- Users of the Viaduct Cycleway / Public Bridleway 333/RB7/1 experience filtered and/or heavily filtered views
- A number of residents occupying properties along Pantolf Place that have mature trees to the back of their rear gardens along the towing path
- Users of Brownsover Road
- Visitors to elevated areas / the plateau within Newbold Quarry Park

5. SITE ANALYSIS AND LANDSCAPE / VISUAL MITIGATION

- 5.1.1 Following fieldwork and the findings of desktop landscape and visual analysis, a **Key Consideration Plan (Figure 7 at Appendix A)** has been produced to illustrate the key design considerations for development of a landscape-led masterplan for the Site. These arise from consideration of: existing features and the landscape / visual context; analysis following desktop research, including review of published guidance documents and the requirements of planning policy.

Reducing Adverse Landscape and Visual Effects – Mitigation Measures

- 5.1.2 In consideration of the above analysis, this LVA has identified opportunities and constraints for the potential to develop the Site and has outlined a series of recommendations to maximise these opportunities and to assist in assimilating development into the landscape - minimising its impact on the existing character and views.

Layout & Scale

- 5.1.3 **Recommendation 1:** A masterplan for the Site should be based on a landscape-led approach, retaining the key landscape and ecological features and integrating them to form part of a strong Green Infrastructure Framework - which can serve the multi-functional purposes of:
- responding to sense of place
 - assimilating development into its context
 - achieving requirements for biodiversity net gain
 - integrating a sustainable drainage strategy
 - providing requirements for formal and informal recreation, play, sport and open space
- 5.1.4 **Recommendation 2:** Development parcels should be offset from existing retained landscape features, to ensure they remain sustainable in the long term.
- 5.1.5 **Recommendation 3:** A buffer should be provided along the rural facing north west edge of the Site, to assist in assimilating development into the adjacent rural landscape. A buffer should also be provided along the eastern boundary, to reinforce the GI corridor of the Viaduct Cycleway and reduce visual impact on new Site residents from the existing Glebe Farm Industrial Estate. The width of the various landscape buffers are recommended in the Integrated Landscape Section as per paragraph 6.1.2
- 5.1.6 **Recommendation 4:** A broad buffer should be provided from the canal edge in the south west areas of the Site, maintaining positive views from the canal tow path and ensuring this sensitive edge is carefully incorporated into the masterplan.

- 5.1.7 **Recommendation 5:** The proposed development should utilise existing landform and respond to the topography of the Site. Development should be orientated to face out onto the proposed Green Infrastructure Framework and public open spaces.
- 5.1.8 **Recommendation 6:** Vehicular access into the Site should be provided at a point along Brownsover Road, located toward the south western end to minimise impact upon existing retained trees.
- 5.1.9 **Recommendation 7:** The height of proposed built form should remain consistent with the immediate residential context of the Site, which are predominantly 2 and half storey detached, semi detached, and terraced houses. Given the scale, height and mass of built form on the adjacent Glebe Farm Industrial Estate, properties of up to 3 storeys would be acceptable toward the north east side of the Site. Building materials and architectural style / detailing should be informed by the vernacular of the local area, to ensure it remains sensitive to the local landscape and townscape character.

Active Movement

- 5.1.10 **Recommendation 8:** To encourage active travel on foot and bicycle, along with encouraging use of recreational walking and cycling routes, design proposals for the Site should create active travel routes within a strong Green Infrastructure Framework, along with providing a link through the east boundary to connect the Viaduct Cycleway / wider PRoW network beyond, along with providing sustainable travel links into the adjacent settlement and surrounding facilities.

Green Infrastructure Mitigation & Biodiversity

- 5.1.11 **Recommendation 9:** Development proposals for the Site must accord with the district wide policies outlined within the adopted Rugby Borough Council Local Plan. With regards to green infrastructure (public green spaces, landscapes, biodiversity and heritage), proposals should seek to reinforce, link and buffer existing assets, along with creating new assets and promoting / encouraging the public enjoyment of those assets wherever possible.
- 5.1.12 Development proposals should identify on-site green infrastructure assets (set out within this LVA and identified by other, more detailed ecology and heritage studies) and supplement these with new and enhanced areas in order to reverse any fragmentation that has occurred over time and to prevent further disconnect in the future. This should include strategically linking woodlands, hedgerows, grasslands, watercourses and biodiversity priority areas to each other and to off-site assets. Any inevitable removal of existing vegetation should be compensated in other parts of the site as part of the wider green infrastructure framework.
- 5.1.13 **Recommendation 10:** New planting should be proposed in key locations throughout the Green Infrastructure Framework for the Site (particularly within destination parks, green buffers and green corridors / links) to help mitigate views of any proposed built form / development areas from the immediate surrounding landscape, townscape, canal towpath and elevated distant viewpoints from the PROW in the north west. Over time, a strong network of new woodland and scattered trees across the

Site would integrate and enhance the existing canopy of boundary hedgerows, trees, scrub and woodland to form a well vegetated backdrop to proposed development on the Site.

- 5.1.14 **Recommendation 11:** New development proposals for the Site should seek to achieve a net gain in biodiversity. Detailed ecological surveys should be undertaken to establish the quality and condition of ecological habitats and should be used to guide future proposals and management objectives for the Site. Existing woodlands, valued grassland, trees, scrub, hedgerows and key landscape features should be retained and protected as part of the proposals for development – providing corridors and stepping stones for wildlife.
- 5.1.15 Areas for biodiversity enhancement, should comprise a mosaic of habitats, including areas of woodland, species-rich grassland, dense scrub and wetland to new sustainable drainage areas. The selection of vegetation species should respond to the local climate constraints in tandem with the biodiversity enhancement objectives, ensuring that vegetation species are climate resilient and can provide habitat enhancements for local wildlife.

Climate Adaption

- 5.1.16 **Recommendation 12:** Sustainable drainage (SuDS) should be carefully and sensitively integrated into the Green Infrastructure Framework, to include above ground systems such as ponds, swales and raingardens, optimising their contribution to biodiversity / wildlife habitat and landscape character / placemaking of the new development, along with conventional functions of flood alleviation.
- 5.1.17 **Recommendation 13:** The landscape design should respond to the specific climate constraints of the local area, seeking to enhance the Oxford Canal corridor and utilising current and innovative methods of water attenuation and treatment for use across the development. Opportunities should be sought to incorporate up to date advancements in low carbon / renewable energy technologies and grey water harvesting throughout the lifetime of the project, to contribute to climate change adaptation.
- 5.1.18 **Recommendation 14:** Proposals should promote walking, cycling and the reduction of car use through new and innovative movement opportunities within the landscape, to encourage sustainable travel alternatives.

6. INTEGRATED LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

- 6.1.1 The Landscape Strategy builds upon on the analysis of the Site and the above recommendations, with the following principles devised to form an integral part of a landscape-led masterplan.

Retention of existing boundary vegetation / habitats

- 6.1.2 A minimum 5m wide landscape buffer should be provided from the hedge and scrub along the eastern boundary, to allow adequate space for retention and reinforcement. A 5 - 10m wide landscape buffer should be provided from the scrub and trees on the southern boundary, to allow adequate space for retention of the existing vegetation on the canal cutting. A minimum of 10m wide landscape buffer should be provided from the existing hedgerow and trees along Brownsover Road to allow space for retention and reinforcement and create a robust edge to the Green Belt.

Primary GI / biodiversity corridors

- 6.1.3 Three primary green infrastructure and biodiversity corridors should be established along the eastern, north western and southern boundaries of the Site, linking to the wider strategic green infrastructure network.
- 6.1.4 **Eastern boundary:** supplementary planting should further enhance the existing woody habitats of scrub and hedgerow, creating a mosaic of value for a range of insect species, bats, and birds etc. A new pedestrian and cycle access point should be provided from the development to the existing Viaduct Cycleway to encourage an active travel connection with the existing settlement and wider countryside.
- 6.1.5 **Southern boundary:** responding to the localised distinctiveness of the Oxford Canal, proposals should enhance the existing changing character from west to east, of the: Urban Residential Moorings, Urban Fenced Edge, tranquil Urban Park Edge, and Wooded Enclosure. Strengthening of existing vegetation to the south western corner of the Site will help to blend with the wooded moorings further west and create a smooth transition across the bridge into the Site. The Urban Fenced Edge area will experience filtered views of the new built form, through / over a semi natural green space comprising grassland meadows, scattered trees and a new hedgerow with hedgerow trees. The existing interface between Newbold Quarry Park and the Oxford Canal brings a distinctive Urban Park Edge character to the canal corridor. The landscape strategy along the southern edge of Field B will focus on the creation of a similar 'park edge' scene, with grassland and scattered parkland trees. Frequently planted trees will be proposed to the eastern end of Field B, offering a gradual transition to the Wooded Enclosure that bookends the canal journey to the south east of the Site.
- 6.1.6 **Along Brownsover Road:** the landscape strategy should incorporate the existing hedgerow and trees into a rich and biodiverse green edge. Within the landscape buffer, new trees, scrub and meadows should be proposed from the line of the hedgerow towards the development, providing opportunities for long term habitat creation. This robust landscape will serve as a strong edge fronting the Green Belt.

Canal Green

- 6.1.7 Pulling new built form away from the canal edge offers opportunities to create an attractive multifunctional open space / destination on the canalside. Located at the lower part of the Site, Canal Green is naturally placed to incorporate SuDS features and create diverse habitats with changing water levels. Public open space and community orchards should also be proposed to provide active amenity, maximise enhancement to landscape resources on Site and further improve landscape character of the development.

Internal Green Links

- 6.1.8 The existing onsite hedgerow and scrub provides a natural division of the development parcels and opportunities for creating linear landscape and ecological features that are linked to the wider green infrastructure network. They should be incorporated, where possible, as internal green links between development parcels, to help to break up the new built form and soften views. The proposed streets should include vegetated verges with opportunities for street tree planting, to add a further layer of softening, filtering and screening to nearby receptors and those with longer distance views.

Creation of diverse habitats

- 6.1.9 Landscape proposals should also seek to enhance biodiversity, in particular associated with establishing a mosaic of habitats. New hedgerows, trees, scrub and grassland would offer a range of nesting opportunities for birds, invertebrates and mammals. Surrounded by grassland, marginal planting and trees, any proposed drainage ponds should be designed to provide wet or semi-wet habitats for a broad range of invertebrates. Upon the establishment of various habitats, it is expected that biodiversity would accomplish an important net gain.

Planting Strategy

- 6.1.10 Planting species should reflect the native indigenous mixes found in the area, to assist in assimilating development into the landscape. It is recommended that planting along the boundaries and within open spaces is undertaken as early as practicable. This will provide opportunities for small stock to be used and sufficient time for plants to establish before completion. Trees planted during the construction stage would need to be given adequate protection and space for establishment.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1.1 The Site is tucked into the northern urban edge of Rugby, occupying a small triangular shaped area of land enclosed by Brownsover Road to the north west, the Oxford Canal to the south and the Glebe Farm Industrial Estate to the east. The Site comprises a small localised plateau along its eastern part, with an overall fall towards the Oxford Canal. It is not publicly accessible but lies in close proximity to a strong Public Rights of Way network which connecting into the adjacent settlement and out into public access of the wider landscape.
- 7.1.2 As defined in the Warwickshire Landscape Character and Guidelines 1993, the Site is located within High Cross Plateau Landscape Character Area and subsequently in the Open Plateau Landscape Character Type. The landscape is characterised by rolling landform, medium to large scale fields, pockets of permanent pastures often with ridge and furrow, and prominent belts of woodland etc. Direct views of the Site are mostly available along the tow path adjacent to the Oxford Canal. There are partial views of the Site from a small plateau within Newbold Quarry Park. Filtered views are likely to be available from the Viaduct Cycleway, Brownsover Road and from properties backing the Oxford Canal. There are unlikely to be any other substantial views of the Site from the wider area, due to the screening provided by the existing rolling landform, layering of intervening vegetation and enclosure from existing built form.
- 7.1.3 The potential development of the Site will help to form a more consistent settlement edge, in keeping with the existing built form along Brownsover Road to the south west. An integrated landscape strategy will ensure that the new development on the Site would be set within a strong Green and Blue Infrastructure Framework, incorporating areas of multifunctional public open space, forming a robust edge to the Green Belt and compliant with Rugby's adopted open space standards.
- 7.1.4 **The Figure 7 Key Considerations Plan at Appendix A** illustrates how a strong landscape framework - around the Site boundaries and along key corridors through the Site - could assimilate development without significant landscape and visual harm on the surrounding context.
- 7.1.5 It is noted that the draft Publication Local Plan (2016) originally proposed removal of the Site from the Green Belt, stating that *"Land at Brownsover Road is not considered to serve the purpose of the Green Belt and this designation has therefore been removed and the Green Belt boundary amended accordingly as shown on the Policy Map."* This proposal was subsequently struck out, with the Council's reason stating *"Site not justified for release from Green Belt, therefore proposal deleted to ensure consistency with NPPF."* It is not clear why the Council considered there was no justification, as the review set out in the Green Belt Review at Section 2 of this report also concludes that the Site provides a low contribution to the Green Belt purposes. However, the Inspector's Report confirms at paragraph 215 that *"the parcel of land is [not]required to meet objectively assessed development needs of the borough or the unmet needs of Coventry"*. It is therefore understood that the Inspector raised no concern with the principle of the Site's removal from the Green Belt, it was simply not required at the time to accommodate housing need.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – LVA BASELINE FIGURES

APPENDIX B – VIEWPOINT PHOTOGRAPHS

A. LVA BASELINE FIGURES

B. VIEWPOINT PHOTOGRAPHS

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