

Application for the  
Designation of Local  
Green Space for the  
Three Fields, Norton

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**An Application for the Designation of  
“Local Green Space” for  
The Three Fields, Dunsley Road, Norton, Stourbridge.**

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## 1 Introduction

This is an application for the designation of Local Green Space (LGS) for the site known as the “Three Fields” or “Dunsley Fields”. The location is described as "south-west of the T-junction of Dunsley Road and Francis Road, Norton, Stourbridge" (Letter from Planning officer, item 1, Appendix A).

The criteria to be met for a Local Green Space are laid out in paragraphs 99-101 of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019). For a site to be considered as a Local Green Space it must meet specific criteria regarding its size, character, distance from the community it serves, and planning status. In addition, it should be proven that the proposed site is “demonstrably special to the local community” (NPPF 2019, para. 100), and that it has “particular local importance” for at least one of the following; its Beauty, Historic significance, Recreational value, Tranquillity, Wildlife, or for any other reason (NPPF 2019, para. 100).

That the site is “demonstrably special” to the local community is evidenced by responses to a short survey in which local residents and visitors to the site were asked to say how important the Three Fields is to them personally, and how valuable they

believe the site to be to their local community. Respondents were also asked how far they lived from the site, how often they visited and for how long, and to describe how they used the site. Finally, respondents were asked to comment on the site's characteristics of "beauty" and "tranquillity". Extracts from these responses are used throughout this document to support the case that the Three Fields is demonstrably special to the local community, and has particular local importance for its Beauty, Recreational value and Tranquillity. In total more than fifty local residents filled in our survey and copies of the responses can be found in Appendix D.

That the site is also of particular local significance because of its Historical importance is supported by evidence compiled by local historian Kevin James (2019b), and discussed in Section 5.3. The full report compiled by Dr. James is attached to this application as a separate PDF document.

Further letters in support of this application have been received from Friends of the Earth Stourbridge, Wild About Stourbridge, the Rights of Way officer (personal capacity) and several members of the Stourbridge Holiday Fellowship Rambling Club, the former Chair and former Secretary of the original Local Residents Association, the Heron Club, a local Occupational Therapist and a local CBT Therapist, a former resident and now Senior Archaeologist (personal capacity), a local historian, and a number of other local residents. In total more than thirty local residents and groups wrote emails and letters in support of this application, in addition to the more than fifty people who completed our survey. Copies of the letters of support can be found in Appendix C.

A Local Green Space designation would give The Three Fields recognition commensurate with its enormous value to the local community. It is a well-used, well-loved and locally important site, access to which contributing significantly to the physical and mental well-being of those who feel themselves privileged to use it. Access to the site also encourages young people to take an interest in their local natural environment and local history.

Guidelines to assist members of the public in their submissions of sites for consideration for LGS designation have been made available by some local authorities. At the time of writing Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council had not produced a



guideline document for LGS applications. The following guides and ‘toolkits’ have therefore been used in the preparation of this document: The guidance document produced by HM Government (HMG 2014), the Open Spaces Society's guidance on Local Green Space designation (OSS 2015), the Neighbourhood Planning *Toolkit for Neighbourhood Planners* (NP 2019), and *Local Green Space Designation: a toolkit*, published by Cotswold District Council (CDC 2014), which contains clear steps to aid members of the public in submitting applications.

### **Asset of Community Value**

Due to its importance to local residents it may be appropriate for the Three Fields to be additionally registered as an “Asset of Community Value” (HMG 2011b).

## **2 Local Green Space**

The Natural Environment White Paper, *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature* (HMG 2011a) highlighted the importance of green spaces to the health and happiness of local communities. Recognising that green spaces located close to local people provide a range of social, environmental and economic benefits, the document recommended the introduction of a new Green Areas designation. This designation would give local people an opportunity to protect green spaces which have significant importance to their local communities:

“We propose that green spaces should be identified in neighbourhood plans and local plans which complement and do not undermine investment in homes, jobs and other essential services. Given the importance of green spaces to the health and happiness of local communities the Government considers the new designation should offer suitably strong protection to localised areas that are demonstrably special ....” (HMG 2011a, p. 49-50)

The recommendation was incorporated into the National Planning Policy Framework as the new designation of "Local Green Space" in 2012, and appears in the revised NPPF in paragraphs 99–101 (NPPF 2019).

### **2.1 Need for a Local Green Space Designation for the Three Fields**

The Local Green Space designation offers the same level of protection as that given by the Green Belt designation (NPPF 2019, para. 101). The Three Fields site currently enjoys Green Belt status, and is therefore already protected against development other than in "exceptional" or "very special circumstances" (NPPF 2019). It is therefore important to state the additional benefit that would be gained from the site being designated as a Local Green Space, as emphasised in government guidance on the designation:

“If land is already protected by Green Belt policy...consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as Local Green Space.” (HMG 2014, para. 10)

Ever-growing pressure is being exerted on local authorities to release Green Belt sites for development, in order to meet future projections for housing and economic need. And Green Belt designation itself does not recognise any additional value to the local community which a local green site may have above the five stated purposes of the Green Belt (NPPF 2019, para. 134). It is noted that:

“Green belts do not recognise the landscape quality or community value of land”.  
(NP 2019, p. 14)

The Government believes that LGS designations will be of assistance to local planning departments in helping them identify sites within the Green Belt which do not meet other criteria such as having been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), ancient woodland or other protected environment, but that are of significant importance to the local community:

“Local Green Space designation could **help to identify areas that are of particular importance to the local community.**” (HMG 2014, para. 10)

And further, that:

“Local Green Space designation is a way to **provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities.**”  
(HMG 2014, para. 5)

In Dudley’s Adopted background Technical document for Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (DMBC 2009) it is stated that some of Dudley’s green spaces will need to be considered for potential future development:

“Where there is a large amount of low quality, low use, low value green space (which is not important, high value or sensitive green space) that is more than meeting the Borough's needs, some of these areas could potentially be considered for other uses.” (DMBC 2009, para 10.5)

Therefore there is a need for local green spaces of importance to the local community, such as the Three Fields, to be recognised for their local significance. In this application

evidence is presented to support the argument that The Three Fields is very far removed from the above quoted definition of “low quality, low use, low value” green space. On the contrary, it is a site which is very well used and highly valued by local residents and should therefore be protected for the use and enjoyment by current and future generations of local residents.

Despite having a number of well-known and appreciated local parks, the wider Stourbridge area is not well-provisioned with respect of green space. The “Stourbridge Committee area” was in 2009 calculated to have the lowest number of natural and semi-natural green space sites, and parks and gardens sites, and the least number of hectares of green space in comparison to all other Committee Areas (DMBC 2009). The Cotswold LGS toolkit asks whether there is a shortage of accessible green space in the area (CDC 2014, checklist item 4.1, p. 8). There is certainly a lack of easily accessible green space near the Three Fields. The nearest green space is “Swan Pool Playing Fields”, which lies more than five minutes-walk away, access to which lies across a busy main road, the B4186.

It is known from research already carried out in Dudley that sites similar to the Three Fields are very popular places to visit by local residents, and highly sought after:

“There is a strong level of existing demand for publicly accessible natural and semi-natural green space in the borough as the local community have indicated as part of the Householder Survey that this type of green space is a popular place for them to visit.” (DMBC 2009, para 8.8)

Evidence is therefore presented in this application in order to demonstrate that the Three Fields meets the criteria for a Local Green Space Designation, and that such designation would enable Dudley Planning Department to:

- identify the Three Fields as being of "particular importance to the local community" and
- "provide special protection against development" of the site, as laid out in the Government guidance referred to above.

## **2.2 Criteria to be met for a Local Green Space Designation**

The following is an excerpt from the NPPF outlining the purposes of a LGS designation, and the criteria to be met:

99. The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.

100. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

- a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

101. Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts.

(NPPF 2019)

To summarise, in order to qualify for a Local Green Space Designation, a site should meet the following criteria:

- To be without extant planning permission
- Not to be allocated for development in the relevant Local Plan
- Not to be an “extensive tract of land”
- To be “local in character”
- To be in “reasonable close proximity to the community it serves”
- To be “demonstrably special to the local community”

In addition, the site must meet at least one of the following criteria for Local Significance, to hold a “particular local significance” because of its:

- Beauty
- Historic significance
- Recreational value
- Tranquillity
- Wildlife
- Or for any other reason

### **3 The Three Fields**

#### **3.1 Criteria to be demonstrated in this section**

That the site is without extant planning permission, and is not allocated for development in the local plan. That the site is not an extensive tract of land, but that it is “local in character” (NPPF 2019, para 100c). That the site is in “reasonable close proximity” to the community it serves (NPPF 2019, para 100).

#### **3.2 Name of the site, location, and ownership**

The site to be considered is referred to throughout this document as “The Three Fields”. It is referred to by Dudley Planning Department (letter from Planning Department, item 1, Appendix A) as “a site located at Dunsley Fields (Three Fields) (south-west of the T-junction of Dunsley Road and Francis Road, Norton, Stourbridge)”.

The site is registered with H.M. Land Registry, title No. WR 1071 and shown as the area outlined in Red excepting the area in Green (WR 1923) on the electronic copy of the Title Plan issued on 17 December 2018 (Figs. 1 and 2).

Please also refer to the Location Map (Fig. 3).

The ownership of site is listed as follows: Title absolute (19.06.1963) Proprietor: The Borough Council of Dudley of The Council House, Dudley, West Midlands, DY1 1HF and of DX7414443, Dudley 7.

#### **3.3 Planning status**

The site is without any current planning application, and is not allocated for development in the Local Plan, which is currently under review. Senior Planning Officer confirmed:

“Paragraph 99 of the revised NPPF (2019) emphasises that “... Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated...” The

emerging Black Country Plan (BCP) is currently being reviewed therefore... you are welcome to submit an application to allow the site to be considered as a Local Green Space designation" (item 1, Appendix A)

### **3.4 Not an extensive tract of land**

There is no specific guidance given either in the NPPF regarding what is considered an 'extensive tract of land'. The Cotswold LGS toolkit offers this, as guidance on the size of potential LGS sites:

"a potential Local Green Space site must meet the criteria set out in the NPPF, and further detailed in the National Planning Practice Guidance. These criteria are not specific - they do not give set distances or areas, but act as guidance which should then be interpreted at a local level." (CDC 2014, p.5)

In summarising what might reasonably be regarded as an "extensive tract of land" this same document (CDC 2014, p.5) suggests that "extensive" would be something in excess of 20 ha (50 acres).

The Three Fields is approximately four acres in size (see Fig. 2, Plan of site), which is well under the limits of "extensive tract" as defined in the Cotswolds LGS toolkit (CDC 2014).

### **3.5 Local in character**

No specific definition of the term "local in character" is given in the NPPF. The guidelines set out in the Cotswolds Local Green Space toolkit (CDC 2014, checklist item 3.3) have therefore been used as a basis for this section. This document asks those submitting a site to consider whether the site feels as though it is connected to the local area, and asks how it connects physically, visually and socially to the local environment. It further asks whether there are any barriers to the local community accessing the site from their homes, and requests a statement regarding the ease with which people of all

ages and abilities can access and use the site. Finally, a consideration should be given to how a site links up to other green areas locally.

The Three Fields consists of three open grass fields which are separated from each other and enclosed by hedges (Aerial image Fig. 6; and photographs Figs. 8.1.2, 8.2.2 and 8.2.5). The site has a particular character of being a semi-natural area of fields located on the edge of an urban area, and is experienced by local people as being an area of countryside and a natural environment (Figs. 8.2.3 and 8.2.4). The following email extracts are from those received in support of this application:

“[The Three Fields] are vast and surrounded by farms so give a sense of space that is quite unique.... what makes us special - that we are urban and vibrant but also rural and part of our natural environment.” (Survey response 4, Appendix D)

“Not many towns are lucky enough to have access to a facility like the Three Fields.” (Survey response 17, Appendix D)

“It’s different to Swan Pool Park and Mary Stevens Park which receive much investment and are beautiful in their way. The three fields are a natural space.” (Survey response 4, Appendix D)

“The Three Fields is a unique place, it’s not a Park, it’s not a Sports Field and it’s not a developed Recreational Area, it’s a piece of Countryside accessible to the old, the young, pet owners, walkers, children of all ages and it’s ‘ours’ and it should remain that way for ours and future generations to enjoy. It’s low maintenance and yet has such positive environmental impact, ‘its nature for everyone on their doorstep’.” (Survey response 17, Appendix D)

The Three Fields is very well connected to the local area, having five public access points which allow the site to be accessed from the north, south, and east. There are two access points from the layby on Dunsley Road (Fig. 6, satellite image). These entrances are easily accessible for able bodied visitors, though not suitable for wheelchair access. There are two more easily accessible entrances leading from Finchfield Close and Drakes Hill Close. There is also a further entrance to the south which leads via a footpath from Little Iverley Covert (Fig. 8.1.6). In addition to these entrances, a number of gardens from adjoining properties have gates via which residents can access the site directly.

There are a number of well-worn pathways across the site, which act to connect the various entrance ways (aerial view Fig. 6, and photographs Fig. 8.1.6, Fig. 8.2.1, and Fig. 8.2.2). These pathways show that the site is well-used and has been for many years.



There are no public Rights of Way on the Definitive Map, and this has been confirmed by telephone message from an officer of Dudley Council (item 3, Appendix A).

The site is considered by local residents to be a clean, safe environment, which is easily accessed and particularly safe for children, the elderly, lone females, and disabled members of the community. Those with toddlers and children in pushchairs said it was very easy for them to access the site:

“[The Three Fields is] of particular importance for elderly walkers and those with disabilities. The adjoining woodland areas are of course equally delightful but walking in them can be quite hazardous, particularly after rain when the underfoot conditions can be quite difficult whereas the Three Fields are much safer. The grass is regularly cut and the open aspect means that should anyone experience difficulties they are much more likely to be seen and given help.”  
(Email 16b, Appendix C)

The site is easily accessible all year round, since it never gets waterlogged and too muddy, even in winter (Survey response 26, Appendix D). The manner in which the Three Fields links up to and allows access to other local green areas is referred to later in this document in the sections which describe the use of the site by local walkers and ramblers (Section 5.4.3), in the historical section (Section 5.3.3), and in the section on Tranquillity where the local wildlife is described (Section 5.5.6).

### **3.6 Proximity to the community it serves**

A potential Local Green Space should be in “reasonably close proximity to the community it serves” (NPPF 2019, para. 100). More specifically:

“The proximity of a Local Green Space to the community it serves will depend on local circumstances, including why the green area is seen as special, but it must be reasonably close. For example, if public access is a key factor, then the site would normally be within easy walking distance of the community served.”  
(HMG 2014, para. 14)

Fields in Trust suggest that a ten-minute walk, or a distance of 800m, should be considered as an “accessible walking distance of a majority of the population” (FIT 2020), and this measure is also used in the USA by “The Trust for Public Land” who

believe all Americans should have a park or green space no more than a ten-minute walk of their residence (FIT 2020).

The Cotswold District Council toolkit suggests that:

"In order to provide further certainty, it is proposed that Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) are used to define the likely size of a suitable Local Green Space and its distance from the local community. Therefore a Local Green Space should normally be located within 2Km (1.25 miles) of the community it serves and a site of 2ha (5 acres) or less should be located within 300m (325 yards) (or 5 minutes' walk) of the community it serves." (CDC 2014, p.5)

The Three Fields, being less than five acres in extent, at under 4 acres (see Fig. 2, Plan of site) should then, based on the criteria cited above, serve a community which resides within five minutes' walk of the site. Almost all of those who responded to the survey questions (Appendix D) said that they lived either on a street adjacent to the Three Fields, or within five minutes' walk of the site.

Multiple respondents resided in the streets listed in the first two bullet points below. In summary, visitors to the site came from:

- Streets adjacent to site (multiple visitors from streets e.g. Herondale Road, Herondale Crescent, Larkhill Road, Finchfield Close, Drakes Hill Close, Dunsley Road, Orwell Close, Chestnut Close, Partridge Road, Clent View Road, Roman Road).
- Streets within five minutes' walk of the site (multiple visitors from streets e.g. Elderberry Close, South Road, Heath Farm Road, Highpark Avenue, Windsor Road, Lavender Lane).
- Streets within ten minutes' walk (e.g. Gigmill Way, Fox Covert, Hungerford Road, Caslon Crescent, Park Road, Gladstone Road, Gregory Road) or in some cases twenty minutes (e.g. Wheeler Street).
- A very few respondents walked or drove to the site from further afield (e.g. Frederick's Close, Fussell Way, Enville Street).

Those visitors who use the site regularly therefore live predominantly within five minutes' walk of the site, which is within the "easy walking distance" suggested by the Government guidance above.

It is highly important to local residents that they can access a local green space on foot, without having to drive, at least once a day, as emphasised in the following quotations taken from emails received in support of this application:

“We need places like this on our doorstep which we can access quickly and easily and on foot.” (Survey response 24, Appendix D)

“we enjoy walking without having to use a car.” (Survey response 15, Appendix D)

“Unlike other green spaces in Stourbridge we do not have to get in the car to be there within a short time.” (Survey response 9, Appendix D)

“Alternatives require me to drive as the route involves walking the country lane with no pavement and fast moving traffic which is just unsafe.” (Survey response 4, Appendix D).

“We like the fact that in a matter of minutes, we are able to enjoy walking in the countryside.” (Survey response 15, Appendix D)

“If the Three Fields were no longer available to us as an open space, we would lose the opportunity to do all these things within easy walking distance of our home and would therefore either have to forsake the fresh air and relaxation this provides or contribute to local pollution by driving somewhere further away.” (Survey response 38, Appendix D)

“The fields provide a local, convenient and easily accessible natural location where Stourbridge residents and others can visit either to just relax, enjoy the views, walk the dogs, or simply find peace and tranquillity.” (Survey response 39, Appendix D)

### **3.7 Summary of this section**

The Three Fields site therefore meets the following Criteria for LGS Designation:

- The site is without extant planning permission
- The site is not allocated for development in the relevant Local Plan
- The site is not an “extensive tract of land”
- The site is “local in character”
- The site is in “reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”

## **4 Demonstrably Special to the local community**

This section will put forward evidence to demonstrate that the Three Fields is “demonstrably special to the local community.” (NPPF 2019, para. 100).

The Cotswolds LGS Toolkit (CDC 2014, checklist item 6) suggests that evidence to support this criterion might include letters of support from the public, from local groups, bodies or organisations, local councillors and the local Member of Parliament.

### **4.1 Letters of support**

Letters in support of this application have been received from a number of local groups and including Friends of the Earth Stourbridge, Wild About Stourbridge, the Rights of Way officer and several members of the Stourbridge Holiday Fellowship Rambling Club, the former Chair and former Secretary of the original Local Residents Association, the Heron Club, the chair of the Norton Green Tenants and Residents Association (personal capacity), a local Occupational Therapist and a local CBT Therapist, a former resident and now Senior Archaeologist (personal capacity), a local historian, a local bird expert, and a number of other local residents. In total more than 30 letters of support were received and copies of these can be found in Appendix C. In addition more than 50 people completed our short survey to inform us how they use the site and how important access to the site is for them. Copies of these responses can be found in Appendix D.

Note: there is no current local residents association, as the former association the Heron Club was disbanded in 2017. We have support for our application from the former chair and secretary of the Heron Club (Emails 9a, 9b and 10, Appendix C) as well as the chair of the nearby residents association who is supporting in a personal capacity (Survey response 1, Appendix D).

### **4.2 Special nature of the Three Fields**

The Three Fields is extremely well-used by people of all ages, and has been so for many years. Some of the emails in support of this application also emphasised how popular the site is with the local community (quotations from a selection of Survey responses, Appendix D):

“Used extensively by the people in the community.”

“There are many people who use this site... weekends can get quite busy.”

“This is a very popular green space for residents... because it is within easy walking distance.”

“Lots of people in the community use it.”

“Well used site.”

“well used by all age groups”

“I have seen a wide age range of people using the site.”

“The busyness of the area shows how popular it is.”

“It has always been used by many people for as long as can remember.”

“It is enjoyed by so many Stourbridge people.” (Survey responses, Appendix D)

The site is well looked-after by the local community, who organise regular litter picks (Emails 16a and 16b, Appendix C) which keep the site in an extremely tidy and clean condition:

“Users of the site care about the space to the extent that they litter pick and bag up the overflow from the dog waste bin where this is required and a collection is awaited.” (Survey response 14, Appendix D)

The following statements in particular reflect that the site is of importance to the community because of its special nature, appreciated by all who visit, a tremendous amenity in an area of Stourbridge which is not particularly affluent:

“Once lost it would be very hard to establish such a space as the three fields.” (Survey response 21, Appendix D)

“at a time when preserving wild habitats and havens for butterflies, insects, birds and small mammals has never been more important The hedgerows are alive with birds of many types the hedgerows are a natural ‘food bank’ all for free with little or no maintenance.” (Survey response 17, Appendix D)

“Appreciated and respected by all who visit.” (Survey response 8, Appendix D)

“Tremendous community amenity.” (Survey response 44, Appendix D)

“the area is much-loved as a nearby natural amenity” (Email 17, Appendix C)

“The local community [...] really needs all that it offers. This isn’t one of the most affluent parts of Stourbridge but this is a very special resource which is treasured by the local community.” (Survey response 4, Appendix D)

The Three Fields is particularly special due to its importance to families, children and the community as a whole. Visitors to the site mentioned having walked there with their grandparents, and those same people are now enjoying the fields as a place to bring their grandchildren. Many of those who wrote in were retired people who emphasised the importance the site has for their connection to the past, their current wellbeing, and for their hopes for future generations of local residents to enjoy the site for years to come. Many commented that access to the Three Fields was important in maintaining community spirit, and facilitating social contact, particularly amongst the socially isolated and the elderly. Access to this open site was cited by many as the main reason they or their parents initially moved to the area and continue to enjoy it as a very special location:

“Those three fields were the reason my parents bought the house before I was even born - they loved the idea of raising their kids on the edge of a green belt where they could play in nature safely.” (Survey response 6, Appendix D)

“They are of tremendous sentimental value to me as I would play daily on them as a child.” (Survey response 6, Appendix D)

“It would be good for future generations to use the fields as we have done.” (Survey response 47, Appendix D)

“I strongly believe that the Three Fields MUST be protected for future generations to enjoy and appreciate.” (Survey response 15, Appendix D)

“I hope that one day my children will be able to play on Three Fields and appreciate the wildlife.” (Survey response 8, Appendix D)

“My childhood bedroom overlooked those fields so I grew up with them being the first thing I saw in the morning and the last thing I saw at night.” (Survey response 6, Appendix D)

Finally in this section, members of the local community here voice their very strong feelings regarding any potential loss of access to the site for local residents:

“It would be heart-breaking to lose this wonderful part of Stourbridge.” (Survey response 4, Appendix D)

“To lose this would be an enormous and irreplaceable loss to the local community.” (Survey response 24, Appendix D)

“Not just us but the whole community. It would be a very sad day.” (Survey response 34, Appendix D)

“Please don’t take away our pocket of nature.” (Survey response 48, Appendix D)

“I am horrified to read about the concern over their future.” (Survey response 43, Appendix D)

“I and many more people would be heart-broken if ever this beautiful place was built on.” (Survey response 42, Appendix D)

“My family is disheartened by the news that the land is at risk.” (Survey response 32, Appendix D)

“My whole family fear losing the Three Fields.” (Survey response 5, Appendix D)

“I cannot emphasise enough how much of a loss I feel it would be to that area of Stourbridge to lose access to that site.” (Survey response 6, Appendix D)

“We believe this site is extremely important to the local community.” (Survey response 32, Appendix D)

“Would be greatly missed by all who enjoy being able to walk through the three fields.” (Survey response 41, Appendix D)

“Losing these fields would be detrimental to the area.” (Survey response 32, Appendix D)

“a huge loss to the people of Stourbridge.” (Survey response 44, Appendix D)

“I firmly believe it is a very important site to the local community.” (Survey response 6, Appendix D)

“Many people use this site for all sorts of activities, and therefore I feel it would be a significant loss to the local community.” (Survey response 19, Appendix D)

### **4.3 Summary of this section**

The material presented in this section shows that the Three Fields meets the criteria for Local Green Space designation of being “demonstrably special to the local community” (NPPF 2019, para. 100). Support for this application has been obtained from:

- Local Groups and organisations including: Friends of the Earth Stourbridge, Wild about Stourbridge, and members of Stourbridge HF Rambling Club.
- The former chair and secretary of the now-disbanded residents association the Heron Club.
- Heath specialists including a CBT Therapist and a local occupational therapist.
- A former resident and senior archaeologist (personal capacity), and a local historian.
- In total more than 30 letters of support and more than 50 often lengthy responses to our short survey on use of the site were received.

The evidence in this section shows that the Three Fields:

- is used extensively by the local community
- is important to residents of all ages and from all groups

- is regarded as a tremendous community amenity
- adds value to the local area
- is seen as important for maintaining community spirit
- is seen as an asset that should be passed on to future generations

## **5 Particular local significance**

### **5.1 Criteria to be demonstrated in this section**

In order to be designated as a Local Green Space, a site must hold “particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife” (NPPF 2019, para. 100 b). It must be demonstrated that the site has a “particular local significance” because of at least one of the following:

- Beauty
- Historic significance
- Recreational value
- Tranquillity
- Wildlife
- Or for any other reason

In this and the following three sections, evidence will be presented to support the argument that the Three Fields meets the criteria for “local significance” due to its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, and tranquillity. The significance of wildlife on the site is included under the section on tranquillity (Section 5.5.6).

### **5.2 Beauty**

#### **5.2.1 Defining the Beauty of the site**



The Cotswolds LGS toolkit asks several questions to help those submitting applications in this category (CDC 2014, checklist item 7). Since the Three Fields is not publicly visible from outside the site, and is not covered by any landscape or similar designations (e.g. an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or AONB), the only criterion from this toolkit's checklist which applies to the site is that which asks those submitting an application to "describe why the community feels that the site has a particular local significance for its beauty" (CDC 2014, checklist item 7.2). The Open Spaces Society offers further guidance on this aspect of the LGS designation, stating that:

"This relates to the visual attractiveness of the site, and its contribution to landscape, character and or setting of the settlement. LGS would need to contribute to local identity, character of the area and a sense of place, and make an important contribution to the physical form and layout of the settlement. It may link up with other open spaces and allow views through or beyond the settlement which are valued locally" (OSS 2015, p. 3).

The considerations put forward in this section then, are: Is the site visually attractive, and is it considered to be beautiful by the local community? Does it contribute to local identity, character of the area and a sense of place? And does it allow views beyond the settlement which are valued locally?

### **5.2.2 Visual attractiveness of the site**

The site in itself is undeniably visually attractive, which can be appreciated from photographs taken by local residents (see figs. in Sections 8.2 and 8.3). The Three Fields site is very popular with local photographers and was mentioned in supporting emails and survey responses (e.g. Survey responses 12 and 13, Appendix D; and Email 18, Appendix C). Photographers appreciate the fine views, the open nature of the site, and the often beautiful sunrises and breath-taking sunsets (see Figs. 8.3.3, and 8.3.5). The site consists of a series of three open fields which are divided from each other by attractive mature hedgerows, with a further mature hedgerow along the west side which incorporates hazel, crab-apple, oak and blackthorn (Fig 8.2.2). To the west a

number of mature lime trees frame the far-reaching views, and themselves provide beauty and interest throughout the year (Figs. 8.1.4, 8.2.4, 8.2.7 and 8.3.4).

### **5.2.3 Contribution to local identity, character, sense of place**

The open nature of the site (Figs. 8.1.1, 8.1.2 and 8.2.5) provides a welcome open expanse which contrasts with the urban area to the East.

“I amongst many people in Stourbridge enjoy the beauty it offers [...] lovely place for families to picnic and enjoy, it would be sad beyond words to lose such a pretty ... area that’s easily accessible to all to enjoy in Stourbridge areas.” (Survey response 33, Appendix D)

“The trees and wildlife of this beautiful area is most worthy of conservation for all, this green space is enjoyed by so many... people just appreciating the lovely scenery.” (Survey response 33, Appendix D)

“an important part of what makes Norton and Wollaston such nice places to live” (Email 33, Appendix C)

“This is a special site nothing else like it is available to the public in the area.” (Survey response 17, Appendix D)

The Three Fields has a very special local character, being perceived as an area of the countryside by visitors. Evidence for the rural nature of the site is discussed in the section below on Tranquillity (Section 5.5) and can be easily appreciated from photographs (e.g. Figs. 8.2.4, 8.2.3). That the attractive nature of the site has positively influenced people to purchase their homes in the neighbourhood has also been discussed above (Section 4.2).

The manner in which the Three Fields links up to and allows access to other local green areas is referred to later in this document in the sections which describe the use of the site by local walkers and ramblers (Section 5.4.3), in the historical section (Section 5.3.6), and in the section on Tranquillity where the local wildlife is described (Section 5.5.6).

The site is located at the extreme western edge of Stourbridge and the border of Dudley with Staffordshire. The site effectively marks the place where a boundary has existed since prehistoric times (James, 2019b). The elevated location and open aspects of the site emphasise this feeling of being at a borderland where neighbouring countryside can

be surveyed (e.g. Figs. 8.2.3, 8.2.4, and 8.2.7). The extent to which the site gives the area a 'sense of place' is further discussed in the section on the Historical importance of the site (Section 5.3.6).

#### **5.2.4 Views beyond the settlement which are valued locally**

The views from the Three Fields are some of the best in Dudley, due to the open nature of the site and its elevation (see e.g. Figs. 8.2.3, 8.2.4, and 8.2.7). The first field, located nearest to Dunsley Road, is at such an elevation that there is a full panoramic view of the surrounding area from this high point. The roof line of the houses to the east is below the highest point in the first field, meaning that the horizon can be seen above them (see background of Fig. 8.1.7). Only toward the nearby Ridge is the horizon obscured by tree cover. The views are truly breath-taking and extend over open countryside towards the Malverns, and Clee Hill in Shropshire (Fig. 8.2.3). Further round the more local Clent Hills appear. Over the urban area the views are different in nature though no less magnificent, with the Rowley Hills being a prominent landmark. The views were often described in the emails received in support of this application:

“it’s a most amazing link to the fantastic countryside views all around. I would think it’s probably the highest point in Stourbridge and standing at the top you can see an uninterrupted 360 degree view of the surrounding areas.” (Survey response 17, Appendix D)

“The natural topography of the location means that you are soon absorbed in the sounds of nature with road noise virtually disappearing. The first field is one of the highest locations in Stourbridge and as such affords some of the best views around the full 360 degree panorama. The current buildings and foliage are below the vantage point thus affording uninterrupted views.” (Survey response 39, Appendix D)

“This is a beautiful site, [...] and the countryside views are spectacular.” (Survey response 44, Appendix D)

“The fields are such an amazing place to spend quality family time whilst taking in the gorgeous views.” (Survey response 23, Appendix D)

“spectacular views over to Kinver and Shropshire.” (Survey response 35, Appendix D)

“Within around 3 minutes I can be in the countryside with amazing views towards both Kinver and Clent.” (Survey response 18, Appendix D)

“It really is one of the most beautiful walks in Stourbridge, because of the wonderful views.” (Survey response 26, Appendix D)

Others commented on the stunning sunsets:

“The views are magnificent and ever-changing with the weather and seasons, we have witnessed many beautiful sunsets.” (Survey response 32, Appendix D)

“The views are quite magnificent and many people go there to observe and photograph the wonderful sunsets... There is nothing more beautiful than sitting on the top of the Three fields on a summers evening, and watching an amazing sunset, or looking across the fields a coat of yellow dandelions, or on a crisp frosty morning misty and mysterious..” (Email 18, Appendix C)

### **5.2.5 Summary of this section**

The Three Fields therefore has “particular local significance” because of its beauty (NPPF 2019, para. 100). The site itself is visually attractive, and it contributes a sense of place, being of a special semi-natural environment which people experience as the countryside on their doorstep. The views in particular are of great beauty and contribute to the sense of being on the borderland of Dudley, looking out across neighbouring landscapes. In summary:

- The site is visually attractive, being valued by local photographers
- The site is considered to be beautiful by the local community
- The site contributes to local identity, character of the area and a sense of place
- The site offers magnificent panoramic views.

## **5.3 Historical Importance**

### **5.3.1 Defining the Historical importance of the site**

The Cotswolds LGS Toolkit has a number of prompts for the local importance of a site with regard to its historical importance (or 'significance') (CDC 2014, checklist item 8). Those of relevance to the Three Fields are: are there historical remains on the site, are these protected remains, are there locally important historic features on the site, including old hedgerows and ancient trees, and did the site play an important role in the historic development of the town.

A historical report on the Three Fields, *The Three Fields: Historical Landscape* (James, 2019b) has been compiled by local historian Kevin James. The resulting document is attached to this application as a separate PDF document, and the main findings are summarised here.

Letters in support of this application include those from a senior professional archaeologist and former local resident who is supporting the application in a personal capacity (Emails 13a and 13b, Appendix C)

### **5.3.2 Significance of the open and undeveloped nature of the site**

While there are no scheduled ancient monuments or other above ground historic remains or structures on the Three Fields site, the topography and location of the site taken together suggest that important historic landscape features lie within its boundary (James, 2019b), and these will be discussed below. The undeveloped and open nature of the site and its surroundings offers the opportunity for the archaeological study of this location which forms part of the longer ridge system running adjacent to the county boundary, which has formed a crucially important line for local groups and territorial units for over a thousand years, as outlined below. Such field studies can be used in conjunction with historical documents to identify particular landscape features and set them in the context of the historical development of the local area. The significance of the open and undeveloped nature of the site is emphasised here by James:

"If development of our Green Belt does go ahead...the obliteration of our historic landscape would be felt most acutely. No longer would it be possible to view the landscape first hand to appreciate the history of its lumps and bumps and myriad convolutions. No longer would it be possible to study its topography in relation to ancient hedge lines, tracks and field systems or to relate it to ancient land use...

I was able to undertake [a study of the Swinford charter] only because there had been limited development in the Green Belt around Stourbridge. It was possible for me to explore the landscape in some detail and attempt to match its features to those described in the thousand-year-old charter. Had the modern landscape been heavily developed, none of this research would have been feasible. Much of the historical information it contained would have been lost." (James 2019a, p.50)

The charter referred to in the quote immediately above is the *Swinford Charter*, an important charter enacted by King Eadred, or one of his immediate successors at some point between 951 and 959AD (James, 2014, p.128-9; Hooke, 1990, pp.162-7).

### **5.3.3 The wider historical context, and physical remains in the vicinity**

The boundary area to the west of Stourbridge has been of huge local significance since at least the Anglo Saxon period, functioning as a boundary in all subsequent eras and remains of significance down to the present day. This importance was first highlighted in "Stourbridge's Western Boundary" (James, 2017), and is summarised in this author's historical report on the Three Fields (James, 2019b). The relevant section is quoted here in full for reference:

"The Three Fields site is located in the vicinity of the ancient county boundary which, for more than a millennium, has separated Worcestershire (and, since 1974, the West Midlands) from Staffordshire. At various dates, the boundary has also delineated the medieval manor of Oldswinford, the ancient parish of Old Swinford, the Domesday hundred of Clent, the medieval Halfshire hundred, the Anglo-Saxon royal estate of Swinford, the Norman forest of Kinver, Kidderminster Rural Deanery, and the medieval (or early-medieval) Diocese of Worcester. It may also have marked the north-west edge of the 7th-9th century Hwiccan kingdom and perhaps even post-Roman tribal territories. Whilst the boundary line probably has its roots in earlier (though more diffuse) frontiers dating back to prehistoric times, it seems to have been in continuous use through to the present day. Most recently it has demarcated the western edges of

Upper Swinford and Wollaston civil parishes as well as the Borough of Stourbridge; and it still, of course, defines the edge of Dudley Metropolitan Borough today." (James, 2019b, p. 1).

The Triassic sandstone ridges which run beneath the Three Fields and to the west of Kingswinford form a 'natural' boundary, and were likely used to physically demarcate the limits of territories from a very early date (James, 2019b). Two manmade ancient boundary features are also located in the landscape nearby; a first-century Roman road, which runs between Droitwich and Greensforge, and the boundary dykes on Wollaston Ridge.

The Wollaston Ridge dykes are a set of manmade banks and ditches of very early date which formed an important and enduring boundary structure. This area of Stourbridge's western boundary has remained virtually unchanged since they were constructed (James, 2017). While there is no archaeological evidence to securely date their construction, they are likely to have been erected some time before the seventh century, during a period when dyke construction was at its height. That they date from the sixth or seventh century Anglo-Saxon influx into the area cannot be ruled out, and they may have origins in an even earlier era (James, 2019b).

#### **5.3.4 Evidence within the Three Fields**

The present western boundary of the Three Fields is mostly linear in nature in that respect differs from the more sinuous nature of the rest of the present county boundary line in this vicinity (Fig. 4). According to James: "This linear form would seem to be the product of a relatively late rationalisation of the boundary" (James 2019b, p. 1). The more sinuous county boundary line to the north corresponds to a system of dykes on Wollaston Ridge which were referenced in the tenth century as '*mæredice*' ('boundary dykes'). The nature of these structures can be seen in more detail in Fig. 5, the results of a visual survey conducted in 2015 (James, 2017). The dykes are approximately co-linear with the longer boundary dyke which, according to Hooke (1983) probably ran along the Kingswinford ridge further to the north.

To the south of the Wollaston Ridge the curvilinear nature of the county boundary extends across Dunsley Road and makes up the first few metres of the boundary of the Three Fields (Fig. 4).

A ridge runs down the centre of the Three Field site itself, and is indicated by a green dashed line on Fig. 4. It can also be seen in photographs (e.g. Fig. 8.1.1). There is also a shallow ridge in the ground which extends from the north-west corner of the site, marked approximately on the same plan with green hachures (Point A, Fig. 4). Dr. James puts forward the possibility that prior to the drawing up of the existing western boundary, the boundary dyke may have extended through the middle of the Three Fields site: “If the boundary’s curve is extrapolated at this point, it would intersect the ridge line that runs south through The Three Fields; and it is not inconceivable that the dykes originally continued along this ridge, eventually converging with the Roman road further south (near Little Iverley Covert or even close to the southern end of Clent View Road)” (James, 2019b, p.3). Archaeological investigations would be required in order to address this possibility.

### **5.3.5 Trees and hedgerows on the site, and the *Croked Apeltre***

“Trees present at the site today consist primarily of twenty one Limes planted along the line of the county boundary. These would appear to be Common Limes, *tilia x europaea* (although the colour of the hairs on the leaf-vein axils might suggest a related hybrid). They currently reach heights of about 15-20 m and appear to be the surviving remnants of the twenty-six trees mapped here in 1882. A few smaller examples of Hazel, Crab-apple, Oak and Blackthorn are also present in the boundary hedge. Despite there being very little Quickthorn (Hawthorn) present, it is likely that the straight portion of the boundary hedge (including the Lime trees within it), is of post-Enclosures origin, probably being late eighteenth or early nineteenth century in date.” (James, 2019b, p. 3)

There do not appear to be Tree Preservation Orders in place for any trees on the Three Fields Site, as confirmed in an email from Development Control, 1st August 2019 (item 2, Appendix A).



That the Three Fields was the probable location of an ancient tree of local historical importance is discussed by Kevin James in his historical report. The site was most likely the location of an ancient important landmark, the *Croked Apeltre*, 'crooked apple-tree', which was referenced in the perambulation of the Royal Forest of Kinver, a document of AD1300 (James, 2019b).

See also below in the section on birdsong, where the importance of the hedgerows is discussed in relation to the local wildlife (Section 5.5.6). Images of the trees and hedgerows can be found in Section 8 (e.g. Figs. 8.2.2, 8.2.3, 8.2.7 and 8.3.4).

### **5.3.6 Historical importance and local identity**

Three Fields is an important historical site which contributes positively to the identity of the area. This argument is pressed in emails in support of this application received from a former local resident, now senior archaeologist (Emails 13a and 13b, Appendix C). This former resident grew up locally and knows the Three Fields and other local sites extremely well, having frequently walked them in his youth. In particular he draws attention to the fact that the Three Fields forms a critical part of a green pathway which runs all along the ridgeway up as far as Kingswinford, down past our site, the Roman Road and beyond:

"The Three Fields is an essential part of the continuous ridge system that includes Ridgehill Wood Kingswinford, and provides a distinct landscape feature that is part of the visual identity of the area, and has been for thousands of years. It is entirely within that context that dikes and similar features occur along the ridge in the Three Fields, where the ridge is less distinct. The Three Fields provide the connection between that ridge, which I walked from childhood, to the Roman Road, Sandy Lane, connecting to Hagley." (Email 13a, Appendix C)

"It is clear that the Three Fields is an important link between two linear systems (Roman road to the south + sandstone ridge to the north). As such, it lends coherence to landscape features that have marked identity and belonging for millennia. Blurring that coherence diminishes that coherence, and thereby reduces the value of heritage assets over a wide area. That is to say, the "Wollaston Dikes" and the "Sandy Lane Roman Road" are perceived in their landscape context BECAUSE of the green link of Three Fields." (Email 13b, Appendix C).

"I am aware of walking both Sandy Lane-Roman road AND the sandstone ridge to Calley Wood, and contemplating the significance of the juncture, when I lived at Brook Street Stourbridge." (Email 13b, Appendix C).

The historical environment can also provide inspiration for young people and light a spark of interest in local history and archaeology. One local resident wrote:

"I would urge you to take account of the historical significance of the area. As children, we used to walk along the 'Roman Road' and imagine the Roman legions marching along it. The history lessons about the Roman presence in Britain suddenly came to life. There needs to be sensitivity to the availability of this 'living history' experience." (Email 17, Appendix C)

This is further highlighted by remarks made by the former local resident, now a senior archaeologist at the Museum of London Archaeology, who recalls walking these fields as a child:

"The section including The Three Fields and Roman road, I regularly walked when I lived in Brook Street, and so did many of my neighbours. It provided an encounter with nature, an opportunity to de-stress and lower anxiety levels, to breathe fresher air and to take moderate exercise, which led to essential health benefits. In my particular case, it helped keep alive an interest in archaeology which has led to a 38-year career." (Email 13a, Appendix C).

And he further remarks that, after a career in which he has had much experience with development, to consider building on this site would be a very poor proposal, and that he would be: "... distraught to learn that this vital link in that green path, so relevant to present-day local people, had been earmarked for development." (Email 13a, Appendix C).

Local historian Kevin James also supports the suggestion that the site could be used for the education of local children and residents:

"The Three Fields is "an important element of our local history and I feel that, if this aspect of our heritage were more widely known and appreciated, it would only add to the enjoyment and value which visitors obtain from this site." (Email 14, Appendix C).

A historical walk entitled "Beating the Bounds" has also been compiled by Kevin James, and is based on the traditional yearly custom whereby members of the local community would walk the boundary of the local parish. The practice is one with roots in the seventh-century 'Rogation Day' processions and in a period before maps served to educate the local population of the extent of the local parish boundaries. The Three

Fields features in the Western Boundary section of the walk, between Points 13 and 14 (Figs. 8 and 9).

### 5.3.7 Summary of this section

The Three Fields is of "particular local significance ... because of its historic importance" (NPPF 2019, para 100b). It is probable that the Wollaston Ridge dyke system extends into the site, and that there are submerged archaeological remains located within its boundaries. The site may be the original location of a locally important ancient landmark, the *Croked Apeltre*, and there is a boundary hedge containing lime trees and other species which probably dates to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The open nature of the location, the far-reaching views, and physical connections with other local historical sites allows for archaeological survey work to be compared to historical documents and the formation of a substantial historical context for the boundary area of Stourbridge. The ability for the public to access and walk the site is of significant local benefit. Public access to the site allows local children to form a mental picture of the past which can help them to envisage their own local history and to inspire them to pursue a career in archaeology and related subjects. It can be argued that Dudley MBC could inform local residents and visitors to the site of its historical context, and the site could be used along with others in the local vicinity for educational purposes. In summary:

- Important historic landscape features probably lie within the site (continuation of the Wollaston ridge dykes)
- The site lies along an historic boundary feature along the local ridge, which has been important for over a thousand years.
- The site forms one element of this boundary which includes local dykes and a Roman road.
- The site was possibly the location of the *Croked Apeltre*, a tree of local historical importance
- The western boundary hedge contains lime trees and various hedge species, probably dating to late C18th or early C19th
- The open nature of the site allows for the appreciation of the location in historical and archaeological fieldwork
- The site remains important for the inspiration of local children and could be used to teach local history in schools

## 5.4 Recreational Value

### 5.4.1 Defining the Recreational Value of the site

The Cotswolds LGS Toolkit (CDC 2014, checklist item 9) asks the following questions in respect of this criterion: Are the public able to physically access the site, and are they able to access the entire site? Is there good disabled access? Is the site used for playing sport, or for informal recreation, and for how long have these activities been possible at the site?

A section regarding the ease of access to the site can be found under the section “To be local in character” above (Section 3.5). To summarise, the site is easily accessed from a number of entrances, and is easy of access for the disabled and the elderly. The whole of the site is accessible to the public, who have used the site for informal recreational activities for over fifty years.

This section will consider the evidence for the various informal recreational activities for which the site is used, as well as the range in ages and abilities of those who use the site. The evidence will be in the form of responses to the email survey which provide information on how people use the site, and the importance they attach to these activities.

The Neighbourhood Planning toolkit (NP 2019, p. 6) highlights some of the community benefits of green spaces which particularly apply in this section, specifically:

- “Being part of the public realm, where informal social interaction can take place”
- “Forming part of a network of paths and spaces, enabling movement through an area”
- “Providing flexible space for recreation, local cultural events and performance”

And in addition, that:

“Green infrastructure contributes to the quality and distinctiveness of the local environment. It creates opportunities for walking and physical activity and generally adding to the quality of life.” (NP 2019, p. 4)

Dudley MBC recognises that the:

"... projected increase in the Dudley Borough population over the coming years means that the need for play space and informal recreation space is likely to increase." (DMBC 2009, para 8.27)

#### **5.4.2 Evidence for Recreational use of the Three Fields**

The Recreational use of the Three Fields is of immense importance to local residents, which can be seen from the comments made in response to survey questions asking about how the site is used by local visitors. Local residents have enjoyed access to the site for over fifty years and it is used for a variety of informal recreational pursuits, as well as organised social activities. Access to recreational activities on the Three Fields plays a vital role in the mental and physical health and well-being of local residents.

The site is very popular with lone female users, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups since the site affords a perceived level of safety commented on in email responses to the survey. This fulfils some of Dudley MBC's aspirations with regard to making public recreational spaces accessible to a number of minority groups, and to encourage their wider use amongst local residents:

"It is important not just to focus on one part of the population when considering future needs and demand for green space and sporting facilities... The needs of gender are also important. For example, the need for green space recreational facilities that appeal to both men and women..." (DMBC 2009 para 8.34)

"... Reducing the fear of crime in Parks and other green spaces is important. A key aim is to encourage even more people to use the borough's green space areas. Safer environments will help remove barriers to access which in turn helps to support the healthy lifestyles agenda..." (DMBC 2009, para 10.1)

In terms of the frequency of use of the site for recreational activities, and the length of visits; around half of the respondents to the survey said they used the site either daily or twice a day. Some visited the site once or twice a week, or less frequently. Half of the respondents said they used the site for between fifteen to forty-five minutes each visit, whilst half used the site for visits of an hour or longer, depending on the weather conditions.

The Recreational use of the site can be divided along the following sections:

- Fitness activities and walking including cycling, running and jogging, high impact interval training, mobility and balance.
- Exercising with dogs, especially with regard to the socially isolated
- Children’s games, recreation and nature education
- Organised recreation and public events.

The site is also used by many for mindfulness practice, solitary walking, contemplation, and related activities. These are considered in the following section, on Tranquillity and mental health (Section 5.5.8).

### **5.4.3 Fitness activities and walking**

Access to local green spaces encourages people to engage in more physical activity (DMBC 2009 para 2.46). "Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities" (NPPF 2019, para. 96). GPs can now prescribe ‘Green Gym’ sessions to patients to improve their health and wellbeing (NE 2016; BMA, 2019).

Levels of obesity amongst adults and children in Dudley are significantly worse than both national and regional averages, and the number one priority of Dudley’s strategic health is to reduce levels of obesity amongst its residents (DCP 2010, p. 28). This and other health issues such as coronary heart disease, stroke and diabetes can be tackled now and significantly reduced for the future by ensuring people have easy access to local green sites suitable for green recreation. DMBC states:

“There is an existing need and demand therefore to start taking action now to ensure that there is a good supply of good quality green spaces and facilities for outdoor sport and recreation in the Borough to help promote healthier lifestyles and maximise the 'Green Gym' potential of the borough's green space network. This is vital in order to help tackle rising obesity levels and related health conditions such as coronary heart disease, stroke and diabetes. Action is therefore required to tackle this issue now to help reduce health problems in future years.” (DMBC 2009, para 8.26)

The Three Fields is used for running and jogging, and fitness training. A number of those who emailed described how important the site is as part of their fitness regime. One woman described using the site a few times a week for running and for High Impact

Interval Training (Survey response 4, Appendix D). As a lone female she described the site as being particularly safe for her to exercise, allowing her to be outdoors close to her home after long days at work, and to stay healthy at no cost. A group of local mums also use the site for running (Survey response 15, Appendix D).

A local occupational therapist also described using the Three Fields as a place to practice mobility and balance with her patients (Email 12, Appendix C).

Many cyclists use the space, and there are often people cycling on the site and as part of a longer route around the local area. Children use the site to learn to ride bikes from an early age as the site is away from traffic. Then later, groups of friends take to their mountain bikes (Emails 15a and 15b) on the Three Fields and further afield, far from the dangers of the roads. For a more leisurely cycle it is possible to ride along and enjoy the peaceful views and landscape beyond:

“Three fields is a valued area to my friends and I, we regularly use the fields as part of our mountain bike rides... There are usually 12 or more people a week and ages range from 14 - 60 years” (Emails 15a and 15b, Appendix C)

The site forms a section of the Dudley Trail, a series of challenging walks in and around Dudley borough. Fig. 7 shows the Three Fields in the 2020 route map, featuring in the 20-mile and 28-mile routes. (DT 2020). The Dudley Trail is sponsored by Action Heart and the Stourbridge Holiday Fellowship Rambling Club (SHFRC). We received emails in support of our LGS application from the Rights of Way Officer and members of the SHFRC, who stress the continued importance of the site for long distance ramblers (Emails 4-8, Appendix C):

"I have lived in Wollaston for 43 years and as a keen long distance runner, when I was younger, I used the Three Fields regularly to gain access to other rural areas. For the last 17 years I have been a member of a local walking club (Stourbridge HF Rambling Club) and still regularly use the Three Fields to get to Little Iverley Covert, Bunkers Wood, the Fairy Glen, the Staffs and Worcs Canal, Kinver, Caunsall and beyond." (Email 4, Appendix C)

"We have over 300 members in our club and it was formed 67 years ago in 1953. Many of our members have therefore been using this route into the countryside a lot longer than myself. This route is extremely useful to all of us that live in Wollaston and Stourbridge in avoiding roads, particularly those with no pavements. Our walking groups regularly park cars on Sandy Lane to start walks of anything from 5 miles to even 12 miles using the Three Fields on the way out or on their return." (Email 4, Appendix C)

The site is immensely popular with walkers who walk the site itself and as part of longer circular walks. From the Three Fields it is easy to reach Little Iverley Covert (Fig. 8.1.6) and through to Bunkers Hill Wood or Sandy Lane. In the opposite direction a regular route takes ramblers along the Ridge Woods towards the “Foresters Arms” public house, Wollaston and beyond. The Three Fields is a crucial link in this route which allows for local countryside walks of an hour or more.

“At a time when it is acknowledged that walking is to be encouraged for a wide range of health benefits, both mental and physical, it would be an enormous and irreversible step backwards to take this space away from the community.” (Survey response 10, Appendix D)

“I walk, especially since retiring, getting both fresh air and exercise - a big bonus after a knee replacement... I regularly walk through the fields, through bluebell woods and either down to Bunkers Hill woods, or returning along the Roman Road.” (Survey response 18, Appendix D)

“At the moment I am able to walk over three fields with my dog and then walk back home over the roman road or sandy lanes, if this was no longer there I would have to go in my car and this is not environmentally friendly... people are being told by government that we need to keep fit and reduce BMI’s we can’t do this if we have nowhere to walk!!” (Survey response 30, Appendix D)

“Living alone, it is a chance to see other people. Without that, I would be very lonely. If houses are built there, there would be no joy in walking around a housing estate.” (Survey response 18, Appendix D)

The site also features in a historical walk “Beating the Bounds”, details of which can be found in Section 5.3.6 (see also Figs. 8 and 9).

Local children use the site as a safe and convenient route to school which allows them to walk alone avoiding roads, breathing in fewer exhaust fumes, and lessening the impact of school run traffic. A number of parents remarked that their children derived enormous benefit from being able to take time to sit and relax alone or with friends in the Three Fields on their way to and from school. Several people commented that they used this route to school when they were children, and were happy for their children to visit the Three Fields on their way to and from school:

“It would be a huge impact on the quality of our family life and many other individuals and families if the Three Fields were developed – we can never get these green spaces back and we should be doing all we can to encourage people to both exercise both physically and mentally through social interactions in these valuable spaces.” (Survey response 14, Appendix D)



#### **5.4.4 Exercise with dogs, the elderly and socially isolated**

Access to public green spaces helps to develop a sense of community, and aids people in extending their support networks, resulting in the reduction of loneliness and feelings of isolation (Cruwys et al 2018). Dudley recognises the need for green spaces close to home in which particularly the elderly can exercise their dogs, and sees that with a growing elderly population in Dudley there is likely to be more call for these sites in the future:

“There are also likely to be demands for other types of green space for walking and relaxation purposes such as areas of Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space, and there may be demands for amenity green space areas suitable for exercising dogs close to home. Again, where resources allow, access suitable for elderly people and more seating within some of these areas will be important as well as green space safety issues to reduce the fear of crime.” (DMBC 2009, para 8.31)

Access to and use of green space amongst the elderly and those who have a disability are lower than amongst the general population (HMG 2011a). And within Dudley there is a recognition of a need to increase the opportunity for recreational activities for residents of all ages and levels of disability (DMBC 2009, para 10.7). And recognising that as the number of older people in the borough is likely to increase:

“The impact this may have on future demands and needs for green space will be important to consider...” (DMBC 2009, para 8.30)

Almost everyone who wrote to support the application mentioned that the site is enormously popular with dog walkers, and the majority were themselves dog walkers (Figs. 8.1.1, 8.1.2 and 8.1.3). Many of those visitors are older people, who emphasised the social aspects of walking with their dogs, and the opportunities that afforded for interacting with their neighbours. Dog walkers said they had their ‘own little community’ which was immensely beneficial to people who faced isolation during their daily lives. The Three Fields is important in providing a location and space for the dog-walking community to meet and stay in touch with each other:

“We have had dogs for many years and have always used these Fields due to the amount of other dog users. We can always find other dogs on the Three Fields which is great for socialising and training. During the evening time, the Three

Fields can get busy with walkers and dogs which has been helpful and a great space to meet new local people.” (Survey response 5, Appendix D)

“a meeting place for a chat with neighbours from the area; we look out for each other especially when you haven’t seen someone for a while. I have personally met a lot of wonderful people walking with their dogs or just out for a stroll, it’s amazing what you find out chatting about the history of the area and what’s in the local news you may have missed.” (Survey response 53, Appendix D)

“It is a wonderful resource for my dog and I but also a place to meet others in my community. People stop and chat about their dogs, things going on in the community and it keeps people from feeling isolated.” (Survey response 4, Appendix D)

“The area acts as a magnet or meeting point for many dog walkers, cyclists and other users where many friendships have been created and will continue to be. The location brings people together opening up new relationships, something that is now a dying tradition. It is akin to what used to be the local village pub but without the alcohol and is therefore more healthy.” (Survey response 39, Appendix D)

“It is also a special place to my dog who loves meeting his doggy friends there- it is the only chance he gets to socialise and this is also true for a lot of people who use the site. I don't know what I would do if it is built on ... I usually see other dog walkers some of whom I see every day and it is a sociable occasion” (Survey response 12, Appendix D)

“It brings people together who might be isolated, particularly dog walkers.” (Survey response 35, Appendix D)

“... meet other people over there a lovely sense of community.” (Survey response 7, Appendix D)

“[I have] made friends over the years.” (Survey response 44, Appendix D)

“...It also allows me to be outdoors and a part of my local community after long days at work and long commutes.” (Survey response 4, Appendix D)

“Our elderly population are increasingly lonely and value their 'routine' dog walks, seeing the same familiar faces and having this opportunity for social connection.” (Survey response 2, Appendix D)

“It is also a common meeting place for the local community and I have made many friendships walking over the years. “ (Survey response 32, Appendix D)

“...great area to live in and visit and everyone stops to chat always see people walking through and lots of dog walkers.” (Survey response 47, Appendix D)

“It is important to the local community as it is in constant use by dog walkers.. Many dog walkers also socialise with other dog walkers when they are out on the fields.” (Survey response 10, Appendix D)

“The area has a wonderful community of walkers who use it to socialise not only their dogs but to meet and talk themselves... The area is very well used by the occupants of the area to socialise, meet up, walk their dogs and generally relax in nature.” (Survey response 20, Appendix D)

Dog walkers appreciate the opportunities to let their dogs run free on the site, and this is of great importance to at least one local resident who wrote about her registered blind father and his guide dog:

“My dad is registered blind and has the most amazing a life changing guide dog who has given him his independence back. She requires a safe place to do what is called “free running”. She works really hard guiding my dad and part of her care is that she gets “free runs” to unwind and be a dog after a day’s work. It’s the most wonderful thing to watch a guide dog free run and it’s unlike any other dog just sniffing about on a walk. They require somewhere quite enclosed and somewhere very safe for the dog and their owner with sight loss. The three fields are just perfect.” (Survey response 4, Appendix D)

#### **5.4.5 Children’s activities, and education**

In recent years there has been a notable decrease in the amounts of time children spend outdoors independently of adults. This is thought to be due to concerns about traffic and safety (NE 2019) with local streets being seen as generally unsafe (NT 2012). While the older generation can recall a time when they were free to run and play in relative safety over a wide area of their local environment, woodlands and nearby fields, nowadays the situation is radically different, and:

“For the majority of children, their main experience of the natural environment is close to home, in green spaces within towns and cities” (NE 2019, p. 18)

It is well recorded that children who are disconnected from nature and spend more time indoors are less healthy and have a lower quality of life generally (RSPB 2010). A modern sedentary indoor lifestyle leads to obesity, and vitamin D deficiency induced diseases such as rickets, short-sightedness and asthma (Miller, 2005). Other studies have found that being amongst nature positively influences the physical and mental health of children and teenagers (Tillmann et al., 2018, and Sheldrake et al., 2019).

“Studies have found that playing in nature has a positive impact on children’s development. And children who visit the countryside are less likely to be obese.” (Jones, 2012, para. 3.2)

The Three Fields is used extensively by children (Figs. 8.1.7 and 8.1.8), either alone or with their parents or grandparents. Teenagers also use the site for meeting up with friends after school or at weekends:

“Older teenagers sometimes congregate and it is beneficial to them to be outdoors and have somewhere to meet as so many amenities have been taken from them.” (Email 18, Appendix C)

“My daughter grew up playing there and as a teenager - went to sunbathe (or sulk) there for the peace and solitude.” (Survey response 18, Appendix D)

Informal recreational activities such as sledging, riding bikes, climbing trees, playing hide-and-seek, flying kites (Fig. 8.1.5) and model aeroplanes and boomerangs, and playing catch, football and cricket were listed by those who responded to the survey. That the site is open in character was cited not only as a reason for the perceived safety of the site, but as a real bonus for many of the children’s games which require a treeless site.

The Three Fields has been described as a vital ‘natural playground’ (Fig. 8.1.7) which allows families to come together across the generations (Fig. 8.1.5), with all the social benefits and feelings of well-being that such activities bring. Family events such as picnics were described in emails, as well as creative play such as ‘looking for dinosaurs’ with grandchildren, collecting leaves and sticks for crafts, and building snowmen:

“The children take their grandparents and the dog over there for kite flying, cycling on the trail, climbing trees and when we have snow we have taken sledges. It is a natural playground.” (Survey response 32, Appendix D)

“in the Summer I play games there with my kids and the friends have even had picnics. Or just for a general walk in the winter when it’s snowing built snow men and also sledging.” (Survey response 47, Appendix D)

“We take our grandchildren onto the fields to play and study nature (flora and fauna). It is vital that children have easy access to the countryside within walking distance of where they live... without having to be ‘taken’ by car... I remember walking in this area with my own grandmother along the ‘Roman Road’ many, many years ago and being taught about it while picking blackberries!.” (Survey response 37, Appendix D)

“I have grown up round the Three Fields and it has always provided an area for kids to play.” Survey response 43, Appendix D)

“In the winter when it snows lots of children use the fields to go sledging.” (Survey response 49, Appendix D)

“many children have learnt to ride their first bikes here in safety.” (Email 10, Appendix C)

“I use them to play outdoors with my 6 year old godson. We enjoy running, playing, looking at birds, playing football, collecting leaves and sticks for crafts.” (Survey response 4, Appendix D)

Interacting with nature such as foraging, nature hunts, and nature-based crafts, bird-spotting, building dens interacting with animals in the adjacent fields were also important:

“Sometimes we are passing through, sometimes picnics/ sledging/ foraging/ bike riding/ tree climbing. My children have grown up using the Three Fields as a playground and love to go there. We have spent hours watching the paraglider or the tractors, meeting piglets and enjoying the sunset.” (Survey response 2, Appendix D)

“We spent many hours over the fields when the children were young looking at the pigs and sheep in the adjoining fields. The hedgerows you can find blackberries and sloes all of which were picked and eaten. Amazing wildlife birds, squirrels and foxes, hedgehogs the list is endless. It’s a fabulous place for children to grow.” (Survey response 31, Appendix D)

“Both my children and grandchildren have... loved the opportunity to see birds, butterflies, farm and occasional wild animals and also to see how many different wild flowers or insects they could find amongst the grass and along the hedgerows.” (Survey response 38, Appendix D)

“The farmers’ fields adjoining the Three Fields are used by the farmer for both livestock and crops. He carefully rotates the use. Livestock includes sheep with lambs in lambing season, and pigs with piglets. The livestock are well looked after but remain in natural organic surroundings. Where else in Stourbridge or the surrounding neighbourhood can families take small children to see and appreciate livestock in a natural environment, without driving miles, paying parking fees, and only being introduced to artificial surroundings?” (Survey response 39, Appendix D)

Outdoor learning in schools is recognised as an important way of teaching (PU 2016). In particular, it is important for children to be taught about endangered animals within their local wildlife rather than those in far-away ecosystems and habitats, otherwise they “risk losing an important connection to their local wildlife and green spaces.” (NHM 2017, p. 8). A recent report for The Wildlife Trusts showed that after participating in supervised outdoor activities in nature, children showed an increase in nature connection and an overall increase in pro-environmental values (Sheldrake et al., 2019). In this regard, Dudley notes that:

“There is likely to be even more increased environmental awareness within the future population. This may place future needs and demands on existing natural

green spaces within the Borough. For example, the need for publicly accessible natural green space areas close to existing schools so they can perform an outdoor study classroom role (providing their biodiversity value is not harmed as a result).” (DMBC 2009, para 8.24)

The proximity of the Three Fields to local schools is likely to make it an important local site for future use in the teaching of environmental awareness and biodiversity. A number of people informed us that the site has already been used for such activities by local schools whose teachers have led nature-based activities on the site.

“As a teacher in a local primary school, I enjoy hearing the children tell me if they have been out walking in the local countryside and often see both current pupils and previous pupils while our walking. So I first hand see how many children and families enjoy and value this area of natural beauty.” (Survey response 15, Appendix D)

This learning about nature not only takes place in a structured learning environment. Many people wrote to say they had grown up learning about nature on the site, and had passed on their knowledge and interest in the natural world to their children and grandchildren.

“We love talking about nature on our walks. My father spent much of his childhood exploring the Three fields and the surrounding woodland, he is an expert in the local wildlife which resides here and I feel it is important to share this with my children.” (Survey response 15, Appendix D)

“We all, but particularly children, need such spaces in order to connect with nature. If the next generation have to travel great distances to enjoy such wonders, they will become more alienated from nature.” (Email 17, Appendix C)

“Where else would children have the experience of seeing a mole pop out of his hole?” (Email 10, Appendix C)

#### **5.4.6 Organised Recreation and public events**

Several public Bonfire and Firework evenings have been held on the Three Fields over the past 40 years. The former chair and secretary of the local residents association the Heron Club, have both written in support of this application (Emails 9a, 9b, and 10, Appendix C). The Heron Club has in the past organised these and other public events including barbecues, with the erection of marquees, live bands and games. These events were always very well attended and appreciated by local people (Email 9a, Appendix C). While the Heron Club

itself has now ceased to be, the Three Fields remains an ideal location for such events in the future.

#### **5.4.7 Summary of this section**

The Three Fields is of "particular local significance... because of its recreational value." (NPPF 2019, para. 100b). The site is easily accessed by the public from a number of entrance points, is open, reasonably level, and considered by those who use it to be safe. Local people describe having used the site for a great many recreational pursuits over a number of decades, and it is enjoyed by people of all ages. It is considered to be a secure environment for lone females, children, the elderly and disabled residents and other vulnerable groups. The recreational activities practiced there include all kinds of fitness activities, cycling and jogging, as well as for walking and rambling over the site and circular walks further afield. Local people can easily reach the site on foot and this encourages fitness activities which are vital in the prevention of serious illnesses, and for the physical and mental wellbeing of local residents. The site is very popular with dog walkers, many of whom are elderly or socially isolated, and this engenders a feeling of being part of a local community amongst those who regularly visit the site. Local children enjoy playing games and learning to ride their bikes in safety. Parents encourage their children to play there unaccompanied, and also stress the importance of the site for nature-based play and learning. The site is also very suitable for organised public recreational events which are important for bringing the community together. In summary, with regard to access, the site is:

- accessible in its entirety to the public
- easily accessed from a number of entrances
- accessible to the disabled and the elderly
- popular with people of all ages, and especially so with women and members of vulnerable groups.

And with regard to particular recreational activities, the site:

- has been used for informal recreation for over fifty years
- is used by at least 70 visitors per hour on an average day, and site visits last up to an hour or more
- is very popular for walkers, cyclists, and people using the site for fitness and as a 'green gym'
- forms part of a wider green corridor which allows walkers to access the wider countryside
- is used by dog walkers, and encourages a 'sense of community' amongst the socially isolated
- is very popular with children, for informal recreation, games, and nature study
- has been used in the past for organised social activities such as bonfires, and could be so used in future
- could be used in future by local schools and community groups in activities related to the local natural environment



## 5.5 Tranquillity

### 5.5.1 Defining the Tranquil nature of the site

In addition to being one of the five suggested qualities or functions of a site listed in the criteria for a LGS designation (NPPF 2019, para. 100), the quality of Tranquillity is also set out separately within the NPPF, where it is stated that:

(Para 180) Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

*(b) identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason.* (NPPF 2019, para. 180)

The Cotswolds toolkit (CDC 2014, checklist item 10) asks those submitting a LGS application to consider whether the site is thought to be tranquil. It gives only two prompts on this category, asking for example are there any roads or busy areas close by, and whether the site is within a recognised tranquil area.

In this section a number of sources are used to arrive at a working definition of tranquillity, and to discuss the importance of the identification and protection of tranquil sites in local plans. The qualities of the Three Fields are then discussed in this context.

### 5.5.2 What is Tranquillity?

Government guidelines relating to noise in planning offers the following broad guideline on what constitutes a tranquil place:

“For an area to justify being protected for its tranquillity, it is likely to be relatively undisturbed by noise from human sources that undermine the intrinsic character of the area. It may, for example, provide a sense of peace and quiet or a positive soundscape where natural sounds such as birdsong or flowing water are

more prominent than background noise, e.g. from transport.” (HMG 2019, para. 8).

Several studies and reports have sought to define tranquillity in a manner that can be applied to the purposes of planning, and some have set out to define how tranquillity can be measured. One of the earliest of studies was conducted by Northumbria University (Jackson et al., 2008), and was used as the basis of the Campaign to Protect Rural England’s (CPRE) “Tranquillity Map.” The following attempted definitions of tranquillity are taken from those studies:

“Tranquillity is primarily a natural resource. It reflects the degree to which human beings experience the environment unhindered by disruptive noise, movement and artificial lighting and structures. In a densely populated, heavily built-up country like England it is scarce and its distribution is uneven.” (CPRE 2006, p. 2)

“For many, the chance to experience tranquillity is what makes the countryside different from cities, suburbs and towns. When we seek to be in places which yield sweeping views, wide skies, proximity to water and close experience of wildlife, we are searching for tranquillity.” (CPRE 2006, p. 2)

“Tranquillity is a valuable and seemingly elusive resource. It is important to people as a state of mind which may be induced by physical manifestation. It is promoted by visual, aural and to a lesser extent other sensory stimuli either as a direct response or a cue to memory. It is aspired to, as it induces or increases feelings of calm and well-being and therefore has positive effects on health and quality of life. This has both benefits to the individual and to the economics of the country. Finding the qualities of places which generate tranquil feelings and protecting those locations” (Jackson et al., 2008, p. 4)

Tranquillity: “a state of calm, quietude and is associated with peace; a state of mind that promotes mental well-being.” (Jackson et al., 2008, p. 5)

“The quality of calm experienced in places with mainly natural features and activities, free from disturbance from manmade ones.” and “The absence of discordant noise is an important characteristic of tranquillity.” (CPRE 2006, p. 3)

A further definition was put forward a few years later, in a report (Jones, 2012) for the Environmental Research and Consultancy Department, Civil Aviation Authority. This work provided an overview of the state of knowledge of tranquillity and tranquil spaces within the UK up until that date:

“Tranquillity is defined as ‘the quality or state of being tranquil; calmness; serenity, a disposition free from stress or emotion and a state of peace and quiet’. It is also described as an untroubled state, free from disturbances. The interpretation of tranquillity is often linked to engagement with the natural environment...” (Jones, 2012, para 2.1)

Work to allow tranquillity ratings to be measured in open environments such as parks and gardens in both rural and urban settings was carried out by Bradford University, and developed in a paper which introduced the “Tranquillity Rating Prediction Tool” (TRAPT), the conclusion of which states that:

“TRAPT will have many applications in the design and enhancement of open spaces and parks in town and country, by providing an estimate of the levels of tranquillity that can be and have been achieved. This is important because it is likely that the level of tranquillity can be related to the “restorative” value of these spaces and therefore linked to health and wellbeing benefits.” (Pheasant et al., 2010, no pagination)

Despite these attempts to define and quantify the quality of tranquillity, there remains no objective or consistent application of approach on the definition and identification of tranquil places, a fact highlighted by the Landscape Institute in a more recent technical information note (LI 2017, para 1.1). The report also emphasised that tranquillity is not synonymous with "quiet", but is usually more directly linked with an engagement with the natural environment, and commonly associated both with 'wildness' and 'remoteness' (LI 2017, para 2.9). This report offered the following conclusion on defining 'tranquillity':

“tranquillity cannot readily be defined as an environmental characteristic or quality as *it is a state of mind* that is being described and thus human perceptions as well as factual evidence must be considered in any studies relating to the term. Tranquillity is, in effect, an umbrella term used to refer to *the effect of a range of environmental factors on our senses and our perception of a place.*” (LI 2017, para 2.10)

Tranquillity can be defined, in summary, as a certain state of mind brought about by a number of environmental factors, and that those factors are similar across many individuals surveyed across a number of studies, and that that state of mind has benefits for the health and well-being of those individuals who experience it.

### **5.5.3 Environmental factors relevant to Tranquillity**

The largest survey of public opinions on what those environmental factors are still remains the work on which the CPRE’s definitions of tranquillity are based. These have

commonly been summarised in the following fashion; when asked to define ‘what is tranquillity?’ the top ten responses were:

1. Seeing a natural landscape
2. Hearing birdsong
3. Hearing peace and quiet
4. Seeing natural looking woodland
5. Seeing the stars at night
6. Seeing streams
7. Seeing the sea
8. Hearing natural sounds
9. Hearing wildlife
10. Hearing running water

And when asked to say what tranquillity *is not*, the top ten responses were:

1. Hearing constant noise from traffic
2. Seeing lots of people
3. Seeing urban development
4. Seeing overhead light pollution
5. Hearing lots of people
6. Seeing low flying aircraft
7. Hearing low flying aircraft
8. Seeing power lines
9. Seeing towns and cities
10. Seeing roads

The original report (Jackson et al., 2008, pp. 148-156) listed the survey responses in more detail. Those of relevance to the Three Fields site are:

Hearing the wind through leaves, seeing the stars, rolling hills, sunlight through trees, deciduous trees, older deciduous trees, the sounds of trees rustling, green hills, distant mountains, bird song, quietness but able to hear birds. Open spaces, openness, lots of space for people to spread out, "a place that suggests 'openness expansive landscape and sky' 'a big sky. Tranquillity of the mind - "an escape, like being in a different world, no stress", "getting away from everyday life and good to switch off", "de-stressed, restful, nice and calm", "have a hectic life surrounded by noise", "escape from the horrible hustle and bustle of everyday life". Absence of paths you have to stick to, so you can be in the same field as someone, but also alone, plus the absence of anti-social behaviour and litter.

A summary of these aspects by the Landscape Institute report (LI 2017, para. 3.16), sought to put these responses within four broad categories:

- Perceived links to nature and natural features - seeing, hearing and/or experiencing nature and natural features.
- Landscape - experiencing (particularly in visual terms) the landscape or elements of it including wild landscapes and rolling countryside as well as

characteristics such as fields, moors, woodlands, flora and fauna, natural colours and open views and the sound of water.

- The importance of wildlife – seeing wildlife behaving naturally, hearing birdsong.
- Peace, quiet and calm – the absence of noise and the feeling of ‘getting away from it all’, including a need for solitude.

In considering the Three Fields site, each of the four broad categories described above is taken in turn. The section concludes with a consideration of the physical and mental health benefits of having access to a tranquil place. Quotations from emails received from residents who use the Three Fields are used throughout in order to demonstrate the importance of the tranquil nature of the site to visitors.

#### **5.5.4 Perceived links to nature and natural features**

“Perceived links to nature and natural features - seeing, hearing and/or experiencing nature and natural features.” (LI 2017, para. 3.16)

Although situated on the edge of the urban area, the Three Fields has very much a feel of being part of the countryside and farmland beyond, contains natural features such as hedgerows, and is inhabited or visited by a range of wildlife (see e.g. Figs. 8.1.4, 8.1.6, 8.2.2, 8.3.1 and 8.3.2). The site can be defined as a ‘natural space’ based on the ANGSt definition:

"The definition of natural space within ANGSt is 'places where human control and activities are not intensive so that a feeling of naturalness is allowed to predominate'." (NE 2010, p. 48)

The site can also be categorised within the above paper’s four levels of naturalness within level 1: "Remnant countryside (within urban and urban fringe areas)" (NE 2010, p. 48)

The Three Fields is experienced as a natural space, rather than either a local park or amenity green space, by those who visit the site. It was described as a *‘piece of the countryside’* and a *‘tranquil country space’* in emails which emphasised the rural feel of the site. For example:

“... horses often in the adjacent fields, the wide variety of birdlife, the neighbouring farmland where the farmer will often rotate his sheep and give us the pleasure of their company for a few months of the year.” (Survey response 35, Appendix D)

“an amazing place to watch nature at work.” (Survey response 23, Appendix D)

“for a relaxing country walk after a hard day at work.” (Survey response 5, Appendix D)

“Opening my curtains to rolling fields every day.” (Survey response 48, Appendix D)

“The views are great and it’s a good place to unwind at the end of the working day and week as it’s so peaceful and quiet there. I have watched the farm animals on the other side of the fence on many occasions and this would be a real blow to the community to lose this valuable facility” (Survey response 52, Appendix D)

“My family adore the three fields. With its beautiful countryside views on our doorstep, offering a diverse range of local nature.” (Survey response 7, Appendix D)

“At the moment it is a beautiful, tranquil country space - it's stunning all year round whatever the weather.” (Survey response 5, Appendix D)

Though well used, the site is never crowded with people. There are no roads or road signs visible from the site, and throughout the majority of the site there is no sound of traffic. The majority of the site is filled with the sound of birdsong. There are no overhead power cables, no light pollution, and it is regularly cleared of litter by volunteers. All of these factors contribute to the feeling of tranquillity experienced on the site.

### **5.5.5 Elements of the Landscape**

“experiencing (particularly in visual terms) the landscape or elements of it including wild landscapes and rolling countryside as well as characteristics such as fields, moors, woodlands, flora and fauna, natural colours and open views and the sound of water.” (LI 2017, para. 3.16)

The importance of the far-reaching views of local countryside from the Three Fields has been discussed above (Section 5.2.4) and can be seen in photographs (e.g. Figs. 8.2.7 and 8.3.1). The following extracts from emails emphasise the feelings of tranquillity and peace experienced by visitors to the site on account of these views:

“The views and tranquillity are a very real comfort away from the frantic traffic and crowded areas that most of us live in.” (Survey response 20, Appendix D)

“I love using the space to enjoy the great outdoors, the views and the tranquillity.” (Survey response 10, Appendix D)

“Sitting at the top of the three fields you can look out onto the magnificent views and let all your worries drift away.” (Survey response 23, Appendix D)

“I enjoy the views over towards Kinver. It is a nice contrast between the open vistas of the three fields and the trees of the small covert. It is needed in my opinion and to be protected. When so many of us are contained within our work place and live in small brick boxes on small plots that are hemmed in without any wide outlooks.” (Survey response 46, Appendix D)

The lack of light pollution and “dark skies” which allow visibility of stars at night is one of the contributors to feelings of tranquillity as defined above, and this was important to those who emailed in response to the survey, for example:

“The night sky is beautiful from our garden on a clear night as we have no light pollution. We’ve seen many a shooting star...” (Survey response 48, Appendix D).

The CPRE recommends that:

“Local authorities should develop policies to control light pollution in local plans which will ensure that existing dark skies are protected” (CPRE 2016, p. 15)

### **5.5.6 The importance of wildlife**

“The importance of wildlife – seeing wildlife behaving naturally, hearing birdsong.” (LI 2017, para. 3.16)

The presence of wildlife on the site was listed by many who wrote to support this application. The natural sound environment in particular was highly valued by visitors. This was especially true of birdsong, which was frequently mentioned. That the presence of birdsong was demonstrably quantifiably linked to a lower prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress amongst those fortunate to experience it has recently been reported (Cox et al., 2017). Here are some of the comments received from those who enjoy the peace and tranquillity that comes from being able to hear birdsong and other natural sounds on the Three Fields:

"I particularly like hearing all the birds chirruping in the hedges which form a natural border between each field... Hearing the nearby farm animals in their fields." (Survey response 19, Appendix D)

"It's uplifting and a great health benefit to walk the Three Fields and take in the nature and bird song that's all around." (Survey response 17, Appendix D)

"The lime trees along the field edges fill the air with a heavy scent in the summer and if the grass is unmown as it has been in recent years it looks so pretty and is full of bees and other insects... Whether on a warm summers evening or a snowy winters day it is a lovely place to go for peace, bird song and lovely views." (Email 33, Appendix C)

Bird-watching is popular at the site, with people mentioning the thriving sparrow population and other small birds which use the hedges, as well as swallows, woodpeckers, jays and starlings. Others described how they can watch birds of prey including buzzards, kestrels, and barn owls:

"during spring and summer you hear and see Common Buzzards, Red Kite, Jay and during winter there is always a Robin to see and many other species of birds." (Survey response 53, Appendix D)

A survey of the birds present on the site was carried out on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020, by a local bird expert who made two visits to the site and recorded a total of 32 bird species. Of these, sixteen species were either calling or singing even on this winter's day, and included dunnoek, wren, great tit, song thrush, mistle thrush and starling. The full list of recorded species can be found in Appendix B. It was also noted with regard to the presence of trees and hedges on the site which link up local green spaces and act as a wildlife corridor:

"The hawthorn hedges and the row of lime trees are very important features of the site as they provide lots of habitat/corridors for wildlife to move along. The lime trees link up the woodlands of Ridgewood and Little Iverley Covert. Many species of birds breed in these woods. The hawthorn hedges are full of chirruping house sparrows (I counted at least 50!) and provide a link from the houses to the lime trees and woodlands. I observed several bird species flying to/from Little Iverley Covert and houses on the 'Bird Estate'/Roman Way e.g. Nuthatch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Long-tailed Tit. I have also seen pipistrelle and noctule bats here in the past." (Email 3, Appendix C)

The importance of the site as a wildlife corridor means that residents can observe foxes, hedgehogs, and squirrels, as well as moles, field mice, voles, dragonflies, bees,



butterflies and moths. Specifically, people mentioned watching the fields, hedgerows and wildlife over the changing seasons. Spring and especially the colours of autumn were important (e.g. Survey response 15). A number of local residents described how they enjoy watching bats after dark. This is possible not only because of the roosting sites and the dark skies which encourage bat populations, but also because people can safely and easily access the site at dusk. Both pipistrelle and noctule bats have been sighted on the Three Fields (Email 3, Appendix C).

### **5.5.7 Peace, quiet and calm**

Many people commented how they love to use the site alone, for quiet contemplation, and benefited from the peaceful and tranquil nature of the site, which they stated was important to their well-being, and in many cases vital for their mental health.

The proximity of the site to their homes was of importance, as people said they could easily visit the site before and after their busy and often stressful days.

A number of people, particularly women but also some elderly visitors to the site, said they valued the opportunity to use the Three Fields as a safe, enclosed site close to their home, where they felt they could relax. Comments included: “Most of the time I enjoy the field on my own”, “I regularly use the space by myself”, and “It is nice to sometimes to just sit on the grass and reflect.”

The site was described and experienced by visitors as peaceful, “a place of tranquillity”, a “tranquil country space” and somewhere they could use for relaxation and de-stressing:

“It is a real honour to have such a special place of tranquillity on our doorstep... it is an oasis of calm on the edge of the suburbs.” (Survey response 32, Appendix D)

“a lovely tranquil oasis.” (Survey response 40, Appendix D)

“a good " breathing space" on the edge of the Stourbridge conurbation.” (Survey response 28, Appendix D)

“We feel tremendous benefits from spending time in these fields.” (Survey response 9, Appendix D)

“Our eldest son enjoys quality time with us away from the stresses of daily life as we both have to work full time.” (Survey response 15, Appendix D)

“It is good to escape to its beauty and just enjoy the peace and serenity, away from the surrounding built-up area.” (Email 17, Appendix C)

### 5.5.8 Tranquillity and mental health

There is convincing evidence that exposure to the natural environment affects mental wellbeing (NE 2016). It has been demonstrated that experimentally-induced stress improved significantly faster when subjects were shown videos including natural surroundings rather than scenes of traffic and shopping (Ulrich et al., 1991). It is known that there are positive correlations between those reporting good health or higher wellbeing and regular contact with nature (White et al., 2019). Natural England suggested in one report that greater use be made of 'green care' to help people suffering from mental health problems (NE 2016). Increasing numbers of healthcare professionals and academics are advocating the use of "green therapy" - time spent immersed in nature - for the improvement of mental health and general wellbeing (CPRE 2020).

A study carried out by the University of Essex for the Wildlife Trusts (Peacock et al., 2007) showed that 90% of respondents felt less stressed, happier and more relaxed as a result of taking part in green exercise activities. Contact with nature improves psychological health by reducing stress levels, enhancing mood and improving self-esteem (Bird, 2007). Undertaking regular short-duration physical activity in accessible green space provides immediate health benefits to those who are mentally unwell (Barton and Pretty, 2010).

Communities benefit financially from the promotion of wellness through access to local green spaces, which reduces the burden on GP surgeries and primary care facilities (LB 2019).

During the 2020 Coronavirus lockdown, many local people turned to their local green spaces to boost their mental health and physical wellbeing. A report by ITV interviewed British people to discover their experiences during this period, which are supported by academic research (ITV 2020).

Spending time in nature can:

“improve your mood, reduce feelings of stress or anger, help you take time out and feel more relaxed, improve your physical health, improve your confidence

and self-esteem, help you be more active, help you make new connections.” (Mind 2018, p. 2), and

“Exposure to nature has been shown to reduce blood pressure, reduce heart attacks, increase mental performance and soothe anxiety.” (Jones, 2012, para 3.2)

Dudley MBC has made a commitment to "improve people's mental health and wellbeing" (DCP 2010, p. 28).

Many of those who wrote in support of this application emphasised the importance of access to the Three Fields from the perspective of the mental health benefits to local residents of spending time in this tranquil setting:

“The site is a beautiful, tranquil place with views across to Kinver Edge and offers a welcome opportunity to escape the hustles and bustles of everyday life. It provides a unique place for both adults and children to exercise, socialise and experience nature without having to get in a car and drive to an open space.” (Survey response 14, Appendix D)

“Indeed, within Stourbridge there currently are very few places that residents can escape the day to day hassle, vehicle noise, hustle and bustle. Health wise, the fields offer a breath of fresh air, tranquillity and for anyone with mental health issues (depression in particular) walking along the perimeter of the fields offers some of the best therapy and healing – and all for free.” (Survey response 39, Appendix D)

“Three fields ... greatly contribute to the health and wellbeing of local residents.” (Survey response 8, Appendix D)

“In this day and age, the pace of life can be too fast at times, this location being just a 10 minute walk from our front door offers wonderful views and the peace and quiet that is often needed to escape from the business of life.” (Survey response 36, Appendix D)

“The site is a beautiful, tranquil place with views across to Kinver Edge and offers a welcome opportunity to escape the hustles and bustles of everyday life.” (Survey response 14, Appendix D)

“there also has to be recognition of the importance of these kinds of sites for mental health benefits brought by its beautiful and tranquil surroundings within easy reach of the community.” (Email 31, Appendix C)

“The fields are very important to us. It is important to our Health and Well Being.” (Survey response 34, Appendix D)

“It’s important to be able to reconnect with nature in this chaotic, technology driven world.” (Survey response 8, Appendix D)

“The value of the Three Fields site would be only truly felt if it were to be lost. It provides easy access, open, green space to local residents. The impact that this space has on people’s health and wellbeing will be significant, even if they are unaware of it. So much research points to the need for people (of all ages) to have access to natural green spaces within 10 minutes of their places of

residence. Children and young people also need this space to lead active and healthy lives. For local people who do not use the site, they will still benefit from the views, peace and quiet, and clean air that comes from the site.” (Survey response 9, Appendix D)

Some specifically mentioned how access to the Three Fields contributes to their own mental wellbeing, and how they feared losing access to the site and the benefits it brings to their lives:

“For me, the impact of losing access to the fields would be very great. I believe my wellbeing would be seriously affected.” (Survey response 10, Appendix D)

“I and many more people would be heart-broken if ever this beautiful place was built on. My walk in a morning de-stresses me for my work day ahead.” (Survey response 42, Appendix D)

“Breathing the fresh air and looking over to the green farmland beyond has a very calming effect on me - I have suffered with anxiety.” (Survey response 8, Appendix D)

“It can be lovely and peaceful there, especially during the day, with time to enjoy the views across the beautiful countryside... it is a great place to recharge the batteries after a busy day at work. Being out in the fresh air feels good for the mind and body.” (Survey response 16, Appendix D)

“I work long hours so having the opportunity to be outdoors, in nature and be a real part of my local community is vital for me. The three fields allow me to remain healthy, be happy outdoors, be with friends, have family to stay, maintain my important relationships and be safe.” (Survey response 4, Appendix D)

Two local therapists wrote in support of the application, and described how they use the Three Fields with their patients. One local therapist who uses the site with her patients wrote:

“As an Occupational therapist working in Neurological Rehab for the last 20 years I am specialist in anxiety management and also have in-depth awareness of how anxiety impacts on capacity for learning, emotional resilience following trauma/ difficult life events as well as physical health and recovery from illness.” (Email 12, Appendix C)

“As a therapist I see Patients every day who suffer from anxiety and depression alongside other neurological illness, those who recover quickest and have the greatest sense of wellbeing and life satisfaction are those who have connection with their community and exposure to wildlife and green spaces. The Three Fields offers this freely and its value should not be underestimated.” (Survey Response 2, Appendix D)

Another therapist wrote in detail about how he uses the Three Fields in his work to assess and in the treatment of people suffering with Anxiety, Depression and Trauma. He uses the site to help people overcome fears through exposure therapy, relaxation and mindfulness exercises. He is able to take patients to the site from his nearby home and show them in person how to carry out the exercises and check that they are performing them correctly, which is of tremendous benefit to his practice. He notes that the Three Fields site is unique due in particular to its tranquillity, the open skies, and the proximity to wildlife. In addition that the sounds, smells and sights encountered on the site are vital components of the mindfulness exercises he practices there. He further states that, in his opinion:

“Had there been a facility like this at the London Institute of Psychiatry where I used to practice as a Consultant CBT Therapist we could have achieved better outcomes for patients.” (Email 11, Appendix C)

“Tranquillity is good for your Mental Health in Itself and I am aware of at least three local Mental Health groups who use the Three Fields along with ordinary individuals who obtain solace from this very special space.” (Email 11, Appendix C)

### **5.5.9 Summary of this section**

It has been demonstrated in this section that the Three Fields qualifies as a 'tranquil' site. This is based on an assessment of its qualities against the four broad categories of response from the CPRE survey as summarised by the Landscape Institute report (LI 2017). The Three fields is experienced by visitors as a 'natural space' which is part of the surrounding countryside, with a rural aspect, and is never crowded or noisy. There is an absence of traffic signs and overhead cables. There are far-reaching views over the local landscape across fields and woodland towards distant hills. There is a lack of light pollution which allows visitors to see the stars. The site is quiet, with a lack of traffic noise for most of the site, and this allows visitors to enjoy birdsong and other natural sounds. Visitors report that they enjoy observing many kinds of wildlife which either live on or visit the site. The Three fields is a peaceful site, and people who visit report a feeling of 'getting away from it all'. Many people describe the importance of access to this tranquil site for the maintenance of their mental health, and the site is used by mental health professionals and groups in their practice. In summary:

- The site scores highly in many of the categories related to definitions of 'tranquillity' as discussed above.
- The site is experienced as a natural space, and described by visitors as a 'piece of the countryside'
- It is often possible to observe and listen to the sounds of farm animals in adjacent fields
- There are no roads or road signs visible from the site, no overhead cables, and the site is regularly cleared of litter.
- It is possible to enjoy sunsets and because of the lack of light pollution, stars at night.
- There are extensive views over local countryside, fields, woodland, and distant hills.
- There is much wildlife present, especially birds.
- The dominant soundscape is that of birdsong.
- For the majority of the site there is no sound of traffic, and in the first field it is only possible to hear distant occasional vehicles.
- The site is never crowded with people, though well used. It is possible to sit alone and experience feeling of 'getting away from it all.'
- Many people cite access to the site as being of great benefit to their mental wellbeing.
- Local therapists and health professionals use the site in their practice.

## 6 Summary

The Three Fields site at Dunsley Road, Norton, fulfils the criteria for a Local Green Space Designation as defined in the NPPF (2019, paras. 99-101), as outlined in Section 2.2 above.

The site fulfils the **primary criteria** of being without extant planning permission, and that it is not allocated for development in the current Local Plan. It is not extensive in area, being no more than 4 acres in total (See Fig. 2, Plan of site), and does not represent an “extensive tract of land”.

The community it serves lives within easy walking distance, with the majority of those who visit the Three Fields living within five to ten minutes’ walk of the site.

The site is “**local in character**”, being experienced as a piece of the countryside at the edge of the urban environment. It is described by visitors as neither a local park nor a recreation ground, and is locally valued for this special character. The Three Fields are easily accessed via several entrances, and the site connects with local and regional green spaces providing visual links to surrounding areas, and a green corridor for wildlife and walkers alike. In summary, the Three Fields is:

- without extant planning permission
- not allocated for development in the relevant Local Plan
- not an “extensive tract of land”
- “local in character”
- in “reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”

That the Three Fields “**demonstrably special to the local community**” is evidenced from the number of emails received in support of this application. These emails came from local residents who use the site, as well as from a number of local groups and organisations (Appendix C and Appendix D). It is clear from comments made by visitors to The Three Fields that the site is highly valued for a number of reasons, and that a loss of access to the site would be detrimental to the surrounding area and to the lives of local residents. In Summary, support for this application has been obtained from:

- Local Groups and organisations including: Friends of the Earth Stourbridge, Wild about Stourbridge, and members of Stourbridge HF Rambling Club.
- The former chair and secretary of the now-disbanded residents association the Heron Club.
- Heath specialists including a CBT Therapist and a local occupational therapist.
- A former resident and senior archaeologist (personal capacity), and a local historian.
- In total more than 30 letters of support and more than 50 often lengthy responses to our short survey on use of the site were received.

The Three Fields is “demonstrably special to the local community”, being:

- used extensively by the local community
- important to residents of all ages and from all groups
- regarded as a tremendous community amenity
- seen as adding value to the local area
- seen as important for maintaining community spirit
- seen as an asset that should be passed on to future generations

Finally, the Three Fields site is of local importance because of its:

**Beauty:** The site is beautiful, being noted in particular for its exceptional and far-reaching views from which sunrise and sunset can be enjoyed, as well as for features such as the rolling open fields, the nature-rich hedgerows and mature lime trees. In summary:

- The site is visually attractive, being valued by local photographers
- The site is considered to be beautiful by the local community
- The site contributes to local identity, character of the area and a sense of place
- The site offers magnificent panoramic views.

**Historical importance:** The site has historical importance which comes in part from its location in the historically-significant boundary land of Stourbridge, and also from the likelihood of the presence of man-made earthworks of early date within its boundary. In summary:

- Important historic landscape features probably lie within the boundary of the site (continuation of the Wollaston ridge dykes)



- The site lies upon an historic boundary line along the local ridge, which has been important for over a thousand years.
- The site forms one element of this boundary, which includes local dykes and a Roman road.
- The site was probably the location of the *Croked Apeltre*, a tree of local historical importance, being referenced in a perambulation of the Royal Forest of Kinver.
- The western boundary hedge contains lime trees and various hedge species, probably dating to the late C18th or early C19th
- The open nature of the site allows for the appreciation of the location in historical and archaeological fieldwork
- The site remains important for the inspiration of local children and could be used to teach local history in schools

**Recreational Value:** The Three Fields has enormous value for the opportunities it affords for informal recreation for local residents, and in the past has been the location of organised community recreation. The site is used for fitness activities including cycling, jogging and walking, and for the practice of dog-walking; a significant activity for the socially-isolated. It is popular with residents of all ages, from the elderly who find it easy and safe to access, to the very youngest who use the site for children's games, nature play and learning. In summary:

- The site has been used for informal recreation for over fifty years
- It is used by at least 70 visitors per hour on an average day, and site visits last up to an hour or more
- The site is very popular for walkers, cyclists, and people using the site for fitness and as a 'green gym'
- The site forms part of a wider green corridor which allows walkers to access the wider countryside
- It is used by dog walkers, and encourages a 'sense of community' amongst the socially isolated
- It is very popular with children, for informal recreation, games, and nature study
- The site has been used in the past for organised social activities such as bonfires, and could be so used in future
- The site could be used in future by local schools and community groups in activities related to the local natural environment

**Tranquillity:** Finally, the Three Fields is very highly valued locally for its tranquillity. This quality comes from the perceived natural environment of the site, its open views, and for the opportunity it affords local people to enjoy the presence of wildlife, in

particular birds. It is also valued as a peaceful, quiet and calm environment, which leads to tremendous feelings of well-being and relaxation which are vital for promoting mental health. In summary:

- The site scores highly in many of the categories related to definitions of 'tranquillity' as discussed above.
- The site is experienced as a natural space, and described by visitors as a 'piece of the countryside'
- It is often possible to observe and listen to the sounds of farm animals in adjacent fields
- There are no roads nor road signs visible from the site, no overhead cables, and the site is regularly cleared of litter.
- It is possible to enjoy sunsets, and because of the lack of light pollution, the stars at night.
- There are extensive views over local countryside, fields, woodland, and distant hills.
- There is much wildlife present, especially birds.
- The dominant soundscape is that of birdsong.
- For the majority of the site there is no sound of traffic, and in the first, northern-most field it is only possible to hear distant occasional vehicles.
- The site is never crowded with people, though well used. It is possible to sit alone and experience feeling of 'getting away from it all.'
- Many people cite access to the site as being of great benefit to their mental wellbeing.
- Local therapists and health professionals use the site in their practice.

## 7 Figures

**Fig. 1 Official copy of register of title**

HM Land Registry 

**Official copy of register of title**

Title number WR1071      Edition date 05.06.2009

This official copy shows the entries on the register of title on 17 DEC 2018 at 13:57:08.

This date must be quoted as the "search from date" in any official search application based on this copy.

The date at the beginning of an entry is the date on which the entry was made in the register.

Issued on 17 Dec 2018.

Under s.67 of the Land Registration Act 2002, this copy is admissible in evidence to the same extent as the original.

This title is dealt with by HM Land Registry, Coventry Office.

### A: Property Register

This register describes the land and estate comprised in the title.

WEST MIDLANDS : DUDLEY

- 1 (19.06.1963) The Freehold land shown edged with red on the plan of the above Title filed at the Registry and being being land on the west side of Sandy Lane and the south side of Dunsley Road.
- 2 A Conveyance of the land in this title dated 19 April 1963 made between (1) Edward Ernest Marsh and Arthur Ronald Marsh (Vendors) and (2) The Mayor Aldermen and Burgesses of the Borough of Stourbridge contains the following provision:-  
  
"It is hereby agreed and declared that the Council shall not become entitled to any easement or right of light or air or other easement or right which would restrict or interfere with the free use of the Vendors' adjoining or neighbouring property for buildign or any other purposes"
- 3 The land edged and numbered in green on the title plan has been removed from this title and registered under the title number or numbers shown in green on the said plan.
- 4 The southern part of the western boundary of the removal under title number WR1923 shown on the filed plan has been amended.

### B: Proprietorship Register

This register specifies the class of title and identifies the owner. It contains any entries that affect the right of disposal.

#### Title absolute

- 1 (19.06.1963) PROPRIETOR: THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF DUDLEY of The Council House, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 1HF and of DX741443, Dudley 7.
- 2 (30.10.1964) RESTRICTION: Except under an Order of the Registrar no disposition by the proprietor of the land is to be registered unless made in accordance with the Open Spaces Act 1906 or some other Act or authority.

These are the notes referred to on the following official copy

The electronic official copy of the title plan follows this message.

Please note that this is the only official copy we will issue. We will not issue a paper official copy.

This official copy was delivered electronically and when printed will not be to scale. You can obtain a paper official copy by ordering one from HM Land Registry.

This official copy is issued on 17 December 2018 shows the state of this title plan on 17 December 2018 at 13:57:08. It is admissible in evidence to the same extent as the original (s.67 Land Registration Act 2002).

This title plan shows the general position, not the exact line, of the boundaries. It may be subject to distortions in scale. Measurements scaled from this plan may not match measurements between the same points on the ground.

This title is dealt with by the HM Land Registry, Coventry Office .

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## B: Proprietorship Register

This register specifies the class of title and identifies the owner. It contains any entries that affect the right of disposal.

### Title absolute

- 1 (19.06.1963) PROPRIETOR: THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF DUDLEY of The Council House, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 1HF and of DX741443, Dudley 7.

Fig. 2 Plan of site from title document

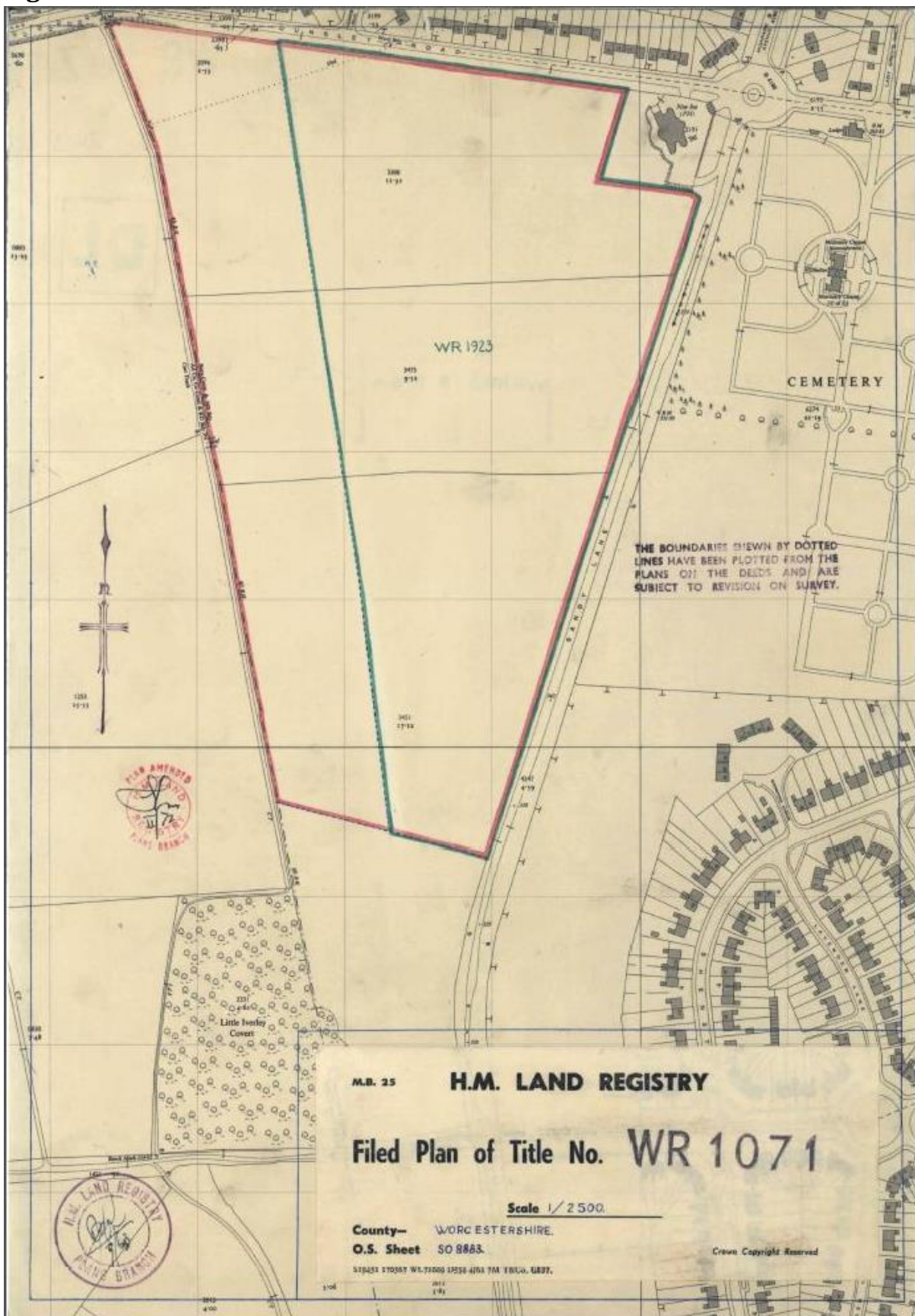


Fig 2: See copy of title document for description of present site boundary

**Fig. 3 The location of the Three Fields**



Fig 3: The site lies to the south of Dunsley Road, Norton, Stourbridge (shown running east-west along the top of the map), and runs north-south along the westernmost edge of the Stourbridge urban area. The site links paths between The Ridge to the north, and Little Iverley Covert which lies to the south of the site. Map source: <https://mapping.dudley.gov.uk>

**Fig. 4 Site in relation to county boundary line**

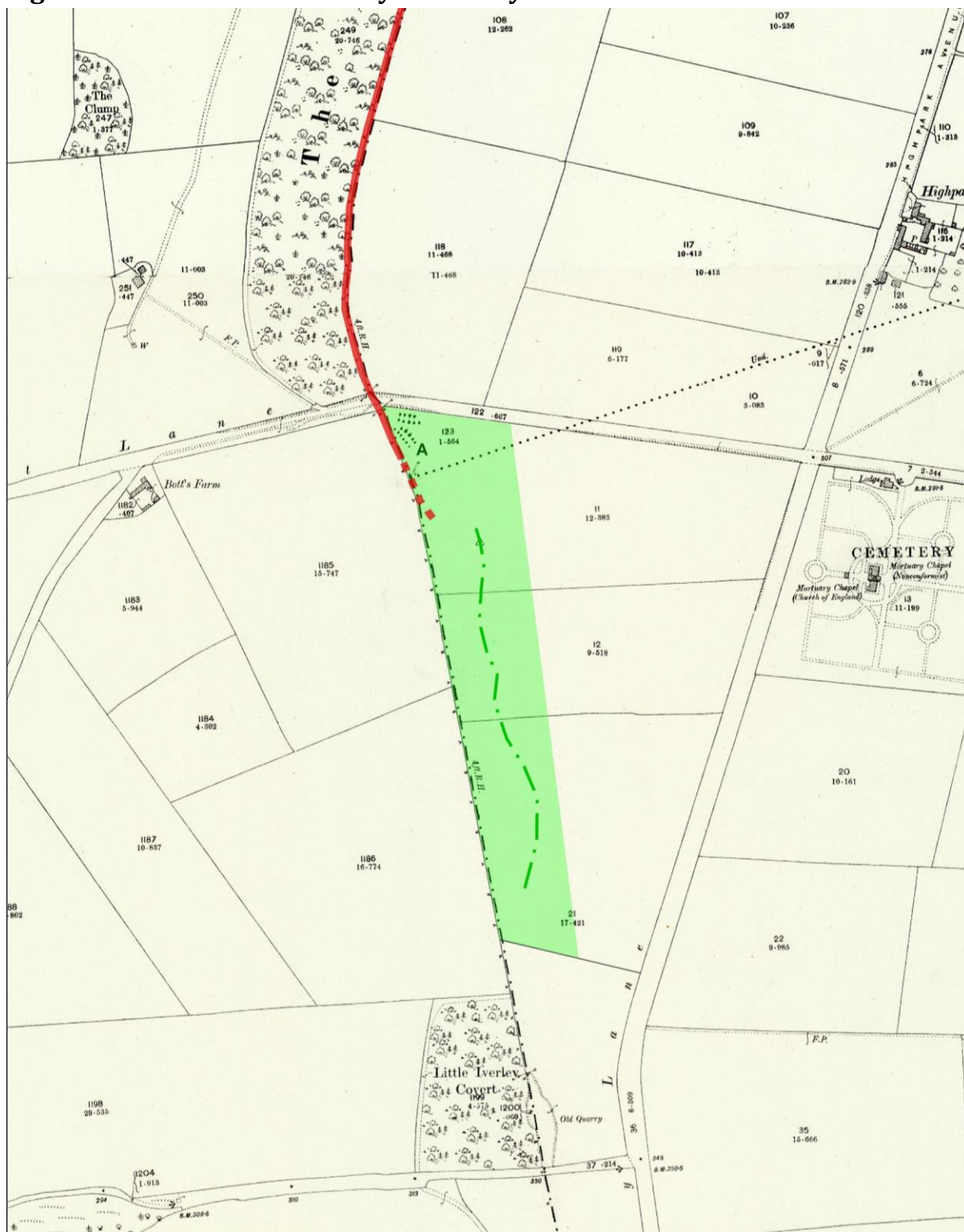


Fig. 4: "The Three Fields site (**shaded green**) shown in relation to the county boundary line. The latter coincides with a system of dykes on Wollaston Ridge to the north. If the sinuous section of the boundary (**red line**) is extrapolated south-east (**dotted red line**), it would extend towards the crest of the ridge (green dashed line) that runs through The Three Fields. The dark green hachures at point A depict (very approximately) a shallow ridge in the ground which extends from the NW corner of the site." (James, 2019b)

**Fig. 5 Wollaston ridge dykes**

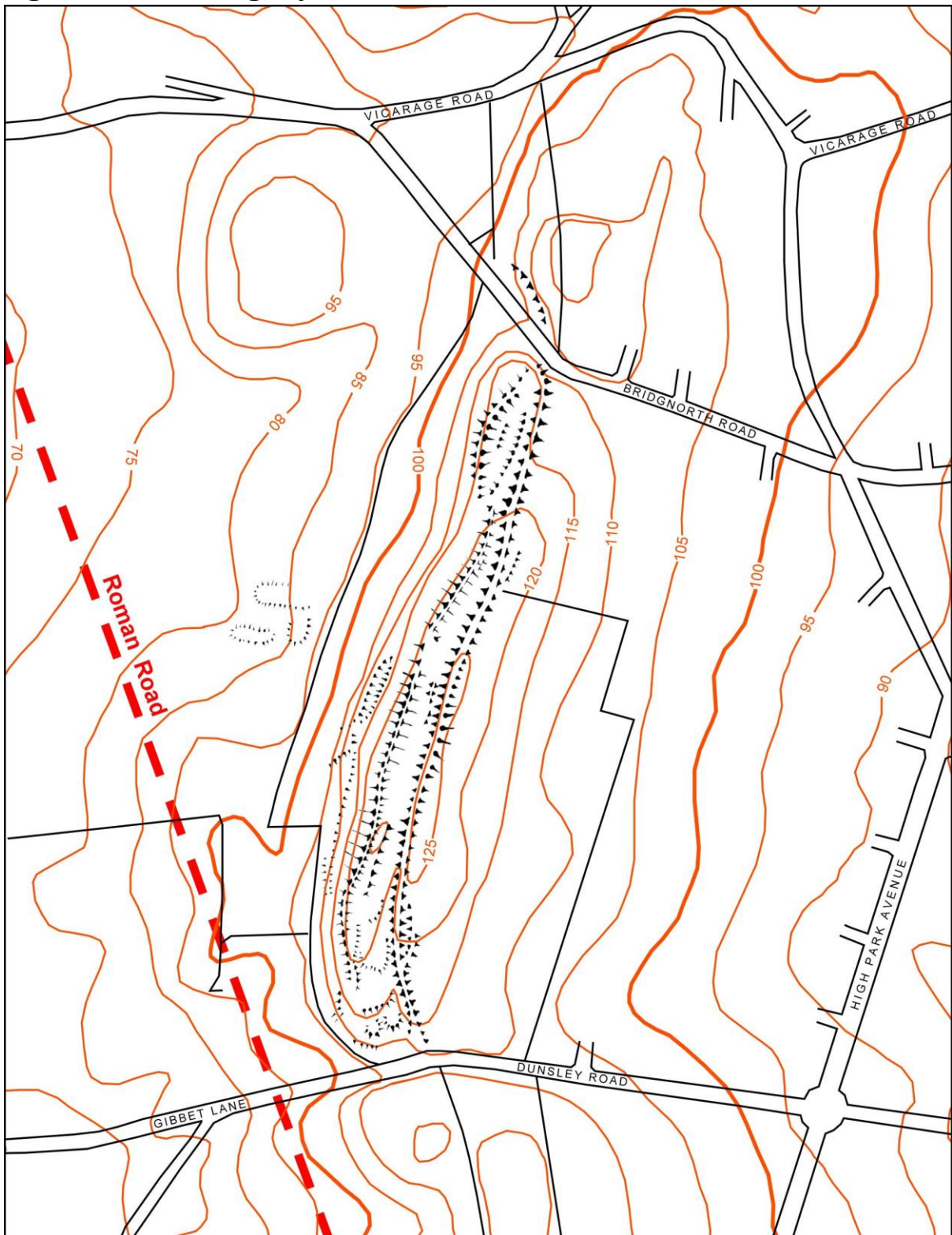


Fig 5. "Wollaston-ridge dykes from a visual survey undertaken in March 2015. Two main earthworks are apparent...The northern end of The Three Fields site is depicted near the bottom-centre of this figure. The county boundary runs along the eastern dyke and then along the western boundary of The Three Fields." (James, 2019b)



**Fig. 6 Satellite image of northernmost field**



Fig. 6. Satellite image of northernmost of the Three Fields, showing the well-worn pathways from the entrances on Dunsley Road which appears at the top of the image. Image copyright Google Earth 2020.

**Fig. 7 The Dudley Trail 2020 Map (detail)**

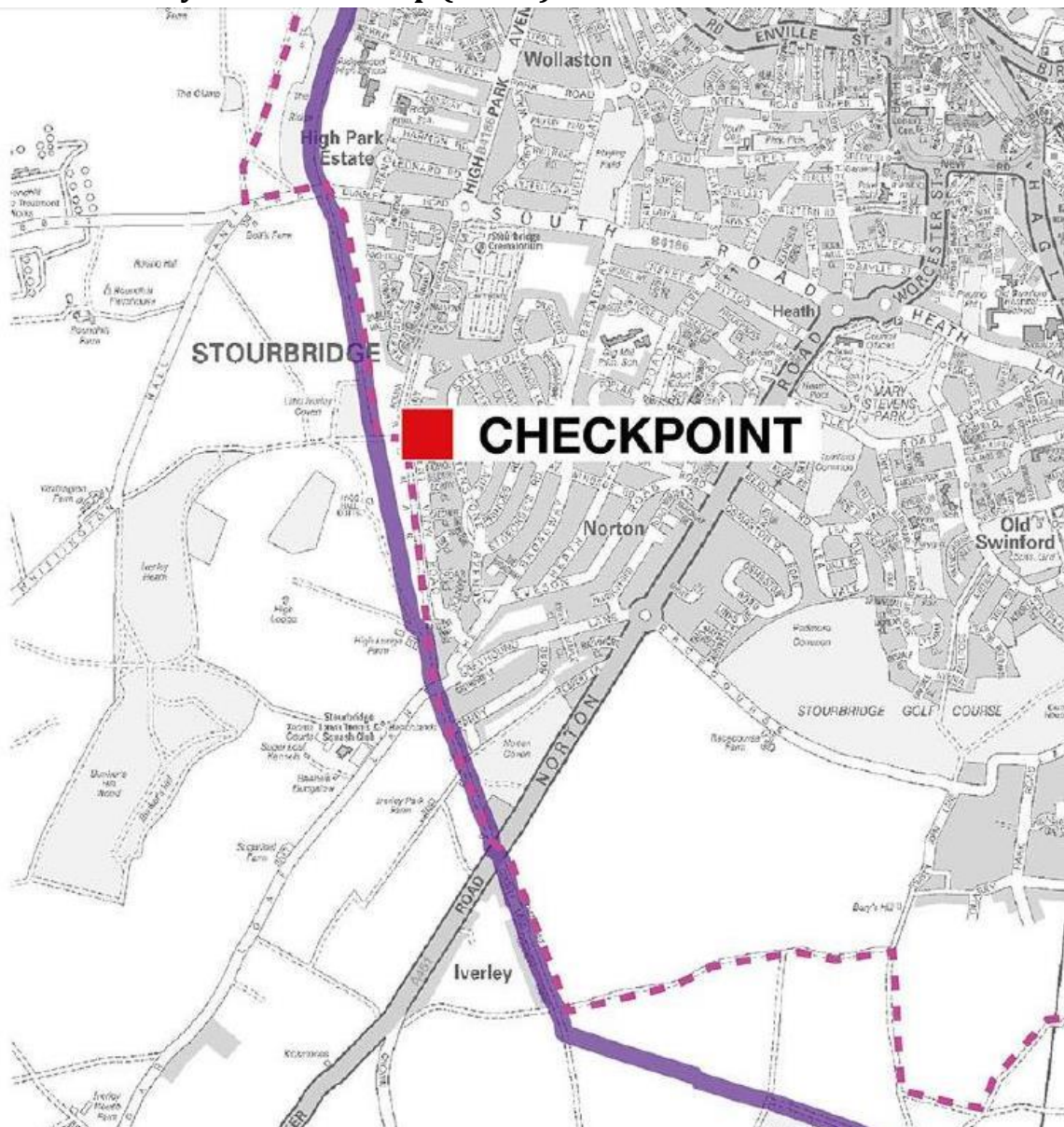


Fig. 7. The 20-mile and 28-mile Dudley Trail 2020 route was to run through the Three Fields site. Image source: <https://www.himleyhallandpark.co.uk/dudleytrail>

Fig. 8 Beating the Bounds Walking Map (detail)

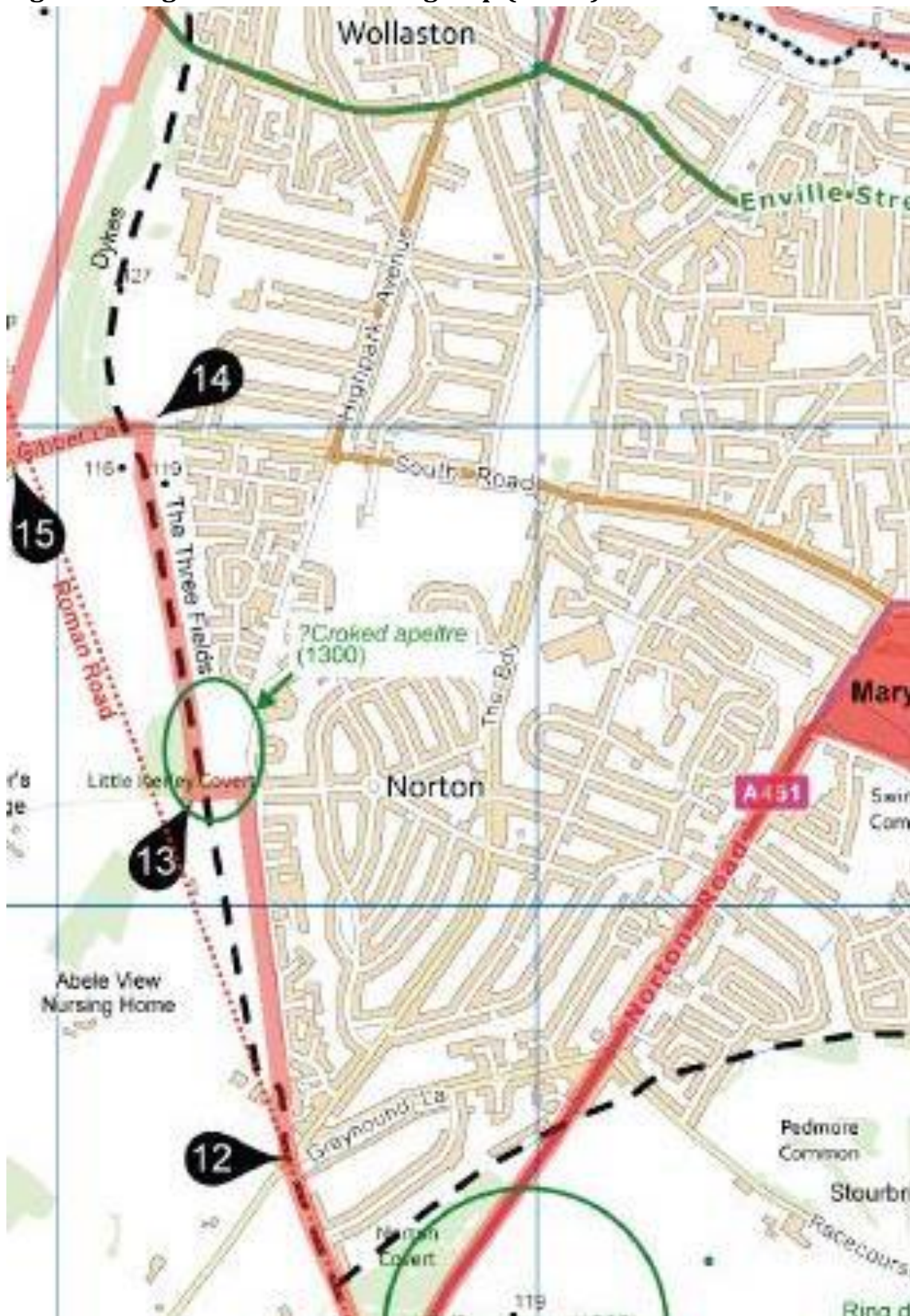


Fig. 8: Section detail from a historical walk "Beating the Bounds", K. James, 2020

## Fig. 9 Beating the Bounds Walk (extract)

### The Western Boundary

Total 9.5km. Difficulty: easy; some moderate inclines

**Mary Stevens Park to Norton Covert.** Take the path around the pool until you reach the Park's corner exit onto Norton Road (A451). Cross the road where safe and proceed left (south) along Norton Road for 1.2km, passing Norton Covert (wooded area) and a cluster of large houses on your right, until you reach the bridle path (11).

**Norton Covert to The Broadway.** Take the bridle path (up the slope). Like County Lane behind you, this also follows the line of the Roman road and parish boundary. Norton Covert, the wooded area to your right, lies within a disused sand and gravel quarry and is now a *Site of Importance for Nature Conservation*. It, and the aforementioned glacial hillocks, were collectively known as *Wolfeswrosne* in 1300 AD, and formed one of the boundary landmarks of the Royal Forest of Kinver. The Old English word *wrosne* meant 'contorted ground'. Continue up along the bridle path (Sandy Lane), passing Sandy Road, to The Broadway (12).

**The Broadway to Westwood Avenue.** Continue ahead along the unmade track, Sandy Lane (which is, from this point, also erroneously known as Roman Road). After a few metres, the Lane veers slightly to the right (east) while the real Roman road continues straight on under the fields. Follow Sandy Lane, alongside Clent View Road, for about 800m. This segment of the track is part of an eighteenth-century turnpike road linking Kidderminster to Dudley and was, in fact, originally called Dudley Road. The Roman road runs along the hedge line on the opposite side of the fields, and the county and parish boundary lies roughly half-way to the hedge line. This straight section of boundary dates from the Parliamentary Enclosures, although a less-formalised boundary must have existed along the ridge line before that date. Continue along Sandy Lane to the top of Westwood Avenue.

**Westwood Avenue to Dunsley Road.** Turn down the unmade track (Swinford Lane) to your left and, after a few metres (13), turn right into Little Iverley Covert (called Whittington Covert in the nineteenth century). The path through the trees is fairly indistinct, but a depression in the ground (the remains of an old quarry) will confirm you are on the right route. You are now back on the parish boundary line, which also marked the edge of the Royal Forest of Kinver in 1300 AD. At that date, the Great Perambulation of the forest noted a *croked apeltre* ('crooked apple-tree') somewhere in the vicinity of Swinford Lane or a short distance to the north. Continue straight ahead (northwards) through the trees, to the opposite edge of Little Iverley Covert, and then along the fenced path until you emerge into the southern-most of the Three Fields. There are stunning views over the Stour valley and towards the Malvern and Clent Hills. Follow the path abutting the Lime trees (i.e. the parish boundary), or along the ridge, to Dunsley Road (14).

**Dunsley Road to Bridgnorth Road.** The boundary line crosses the road at the hill-crest. It is marked, on the far side of the road, by a set of boundary dykes extending north along the wooded ridge. The dykes are known to be at least one-thousand years old but may actually be much older. Although the path along the ridge is private land, it is well used by dog walkers. A public footpath starts about 200m to the west (15) and runs parallel to the ridge.



## **8 Photographs of site**

Photography by Heather Teague, Jana Schneeweiss and Christine Farmer.

### **8.1. Recreation**

1. Recreation: Dog walkers arrive from Dunsley Road in summer, heading to the highest point. C. Farmer
2. Recreation: An important social site for the local community of dog-walkers. C. Farmer
3. Dog-walking in summer; mature hedgerows, and flowering plants for pollinators. H. Teague.
4. Dog-walking in winter along the western boundary, with views of nearby woodland. C. Farmer.
5. Family recreation: Three generations flying a kite in the southernmost field. C. Farmer
6. Ramblers follow a well-worn path south to Little Iverley Covert and routes beyond. C. Farmer.
7. Children enjoy the highest point of the site. J. Schneeweiss
8. A child learns about wild flowers. J. Schneeweiss

### **8.2. Beauty**

7. Views south towards Clent Hills from the southernmost field in summer. C. Farmer.
8. Well-trodden pathways lead through the mature hedges which are filled with bird song. C. Farmer
9. Rural aspect: Winter views westwards across farmland and countryside. C. Farmer.
10. Rural aspect: Summer views westwards over ripening crops to distant hills. H. Teague.
11. Open site: The view northwards across the site towards Ridge Hill. C. Farmer
12. Open skies and the fields in summer. H. Teague
13. Open skies: a summer storm brews over the lime trees. H. Teague.
14. Open skies: A tractor ploughs a nearby field in the breathtaking rural landscape. H. Teague.

### **8.3. Tranquillity**

15. Harvest time in the field to the west. H. Teague
16. Opportunities to see farming activities at close quarters in the field next door. C. Farmer
17. Late summer sunset over the landscape to the west. H. Teague
18. Winter lime trees on a dull day. C. Farmer
19. Winter sunset behind one of the mature lime trees. C. Farmer.

## 8.1 Recreation



**Fig. 8.1.1** Recreation: Dog walkers arrive from Dunsley Road in summer, heading to the highest point. C. Farmer



**Fig. 8.1.2** Recreation: An important social site for the local community of dog-walkers. C. Farmer



**Fig. 8.1.3** Dog-walking in summer; mature hedgerows, and flowering plants for pollinators. H. Teague



**Fig. 8.1.4** Dog-walking in winter along the western boundary, with views of nearby woodland. C. Farmer





**Fig. 8.1.5** Family recreation: Three generations flying a kite in the southernmost field. C. Farmer



**Fig. 8.1.6** Ramblers follow a well-worn path south to Little Iverley Covert and routes beyond. C. Farmer



**Fig. 8.1.7** Children enjoy the highest point of the site. J. Schneeweiss



**Fig. 8.1.8** A child learns about wild flowers. J. Schneeweiss

## 8.2 Beauty



**Fig. 8.2.1** Views south towards Clent Hills from the southernmost field in summer. C. Farmer



**Fig. 8.2.2** Well-trodden pathways lead through the mature hedges which are filled with bird song. C. Farmer



**Fig. 8.2.3** Rural aspect: Winter views westwards across farmland and countryside. C. Farmer.



**Fig. 8.2.4** Rural aspect: Summer views westwards over ripening crops to distant hills. H. Teague



**Fig. 8.2.5** Open site: The view northwards across the site. C. Farmer



**Fig. 8.2.6** Open skies and the fields in summer. H. Teague



**Fig. 8.2.7** Open skies: a summer storm brews over the lime trees. H. Teague



**Fig. 8.2.8** Open skies: A tractor ploughs a nearby field in the breathtaking rural landscape. H. Teague

### 8.3 Tranquillity



**Fig. 8.3.1** Harvest time in the field to the west. H. Teague



**Fig. 8.3.2** Opportunities to see farming activities at close quarters in the field next door. C. Farmer



**Fig. 8.3.3** Late summer sunset over the landscape to the west. H. Teague



**Fig. 8.3.4** Winter lime trees on a dull day. C. Farmer





**Fig. 8.3.5** Winter sunset behind one of the mature lime trees. C. Farmer.

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