



# **VISION DOCUMENT**

**WORCESTER LANE | PEDMORE**

**APRIL 2021**

Prepared for **Worcester Lane Ltd**

By **PGLA**

**FINAL REPORT**



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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This Vision Document has been prepared on behalf of Worcester Lane Ltd. to support the promotion of land at Worcester Lane, Pedmore for residential development through the Black Country Plan (BCP). Following adoption of the Black Country Core Strategy in 2011, the four Black Country authorities have commenced a review and are looking to adopt a new plan to cover the period up to 2036.
- 1.2. In looking to meet the development needs, and specifically the housing requirements of the Black Country going forwards, these need to be considered in light of wider issues affecting the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area (HMA) that the Black Country authorities fall within. Birmingham City have a well established shortfall of housing need extending to just under 38,000 dwellings that it needs to provide to meet its own needs but which it is unable to meet within its own administrative area. The Black Country authorities also have an emerging housing need that they are unable to meet fully within their administrative areas. The needs arising from the conurbation are significant and will present their own challenges in how the relevant authorities chose to address it.
- 1.3. To this end, the land at Worcester Lane, Pedmore, is promoted as being a suitable site for removal from the Green Belt and allocated for residential development. It extends to approximately 3.1 hectares and could deliver approximately 72 dwellings.
- 1.4. The site is well located to existing shops, services and facilities and could make a positive contribution to sustainable development, whilst meeting the housing needs of the Black Country.
- 1.5. An assessment of baseline conditions at the site has been undertaken that demonstrates that :
  - a safe access can be achieved into the site
  - the site will not have an adverse impact on landscape character
  - there are no protected species on site
  - the site is not at risk of flooding and can be adequately drained
  - noise from road traffic or the adjacent railway line will not adversely impact the amenity of new residents.
  - Air quality will not be adversely affected by the development.
- 1.6. A draft concept masterplan is included in the Vision Document, which sets out a number of principles to help guide the future development of the site to create a sustainable, high quality new residential development for Pedmore.
- 1.7. The Vision Document confirms that there are no technical or physical issues that would prevent the delivery of the site and that the development of the site could contribute to meeting the future housing needs of the Black Country in the period up to 2036.

## THE VISION

Our vision is to create an attractive, welcoming, high quality housing development that will be a desirable place to live, but one that responds to the site's distinct qualities and environmental setting. The proposed development, located on Worcester Lane, is one of the secondary access routes into Pedmore. It is relatively well screened from views in from the road at its southern end although views across the site are clearer as you move to its northern end. New development will fill in an undeveloped area between existing housing on the eastern side of Worcester Lane and the railway line that runs between Kidderminster and Stourbridge.

Our three key aspirations for the land at Worcester Lane are to:

1. Create a sustainable development that benefits from the desirable and highly accessible location of the site, being in close proximity to shops, services and local facilities;
2. Develop a distinctive place, building on positive elements of the existing built environment, both existing and evolving in order to create a site specific identity and character that is attractive to new residents.
3. Create a walkable neighbourhood, incorporating areas of new public open space and landscaping, helping to integrate and assimilate the development into the existing landscape.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. This Vision Document has been prepared by Worcester Lane Ltd. ('the Promoter') to support the promotion of the land at Worcester Lane, Pedmore as a proposed housing allocation in the Black Country Plan.
- 2.2. The site extends to approximately 3.1 hectares and is located on the southern edge of the built up area of Pedmore to the south of Stourbridge. It is roughly triangular in shape and is bound to the east by the B4187 Worcester Lane which runs between Pedmore and Hagley and to the west by the Kidderminster to Stourbridge railway line west. Existing residential development lies to the north, east and to the west of the railway line. A public bridleway runs east from Worcester Lane across the middle of the site, crossing the railway line by a footbridge.
- 2.3. Pedmore has a range of local shops, services and facilities present. It is considered to be a sustainable location and highly suited to accommodating future residential development to meet the needs of the District. Pedmore as a settlement, and the location of the site within it, are both considered suitable to accommodate new residential development.
- 2.4. The Black Country authorities have commenced a review of the Black Country Core Strategy which was adopted in 2011 and, therefore, prior to the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework'). The BCCS was prepared to be in accordance with now revoked West Midlands RSS. As such, there is a need to consider the development needs of the Black Country in line with the requirements of the Framework and specifically the application of the standard method to determine the housing needs and housing requirement for the Black Country.
- 2.5. As part of the preparation of the BCP, consultation has been undertaken on Issues and Options back in 2017 and a Call for Sites has been undertaken. Details of the Site were submitted to the Call for Sites and it has been assigned the reference number 10050.
- 2.6. The current programme for preparing the BCP indicates that a draft Plan is going to be published for consultation in August 2021, with Pre-Submission consultation taking place in summer 2022, Examination in spring 2023 and Adoption in spring 2024.
- 2.7. In light of the above programme for advancing the BCP, it is considered an appropriate time to submit further details of the land at Worcester Lane to the Black Country Councils, so that the site can be considered for removal from the Green Belt and identified as a draft housing allocation in the emerging Plan.
- 2.8. To assist the Council in their consideration of the suitability of the site for residential development, the Promoter has instructed a number of baseline assessments and surveys to understand the conditions present on, and in, the immediate vicinity of the site. Constraints and opportunities have been identified and have informed the preparation of a concept masterplan for the site.

- 2.9. The concept masterplan indicates that the site could deliver in the region of 72 dwellings, including affordable housing. In addition, it could deliver: -
- New public open space providing areas of blue and green infrastructure;
  - Areas of new landscaping and planting to enhance biodiversity and the local landscape character, whilst helping assimilate the development into its surroundings;
  - A new vehicular access off Worcester Lane into the site;
  - Enhanced pedestrian and cycle links to adjacent residential and to improve accessibility to services and facilities in the wider settlement.

- 2.10. The Vision Document, therefore, seeks to demonstrate that the site is developable, and capable of delivering new housing within the first 5 years following, as well as confirming that it is free from significant technical or physical constraints that would prevent its development following adoption.
- 2.11. The site is therefore, available, achievable and suitable for residential development to help meet the growth requirements of Black Country in the period up to 2036.



Figure 1: Site Location Plan - Not to Scale

### 3. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

#### PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

##### The Emerging Black Country Plan

- 3.1. The four Black Country authorities have commenced preparation of the Black Country Plan, which will replace the BCCS once adopted and cover the period up to 2036. The BCCS was adopted in 2011 and hence prior to the first publication of the Framework in 2012. It was, therefore, produced to be in accordance with the West Midlands RSS Phase Two revision, which set out housing and employment land requirements for the individual authorities. The evidence base upon which they were formulated is now very dated and has been superseded by more up to date requirements in the Framework and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) that require the use of the standard method to assess housing need and to inform the housing requirement.
- 3.2. In light of the need to update the development requirements for the Black Country a review of the BCCS was commenced in 2017 with the publication of an Issues and Options document for consultation.

#### THE BLACK COUNTRY SHORTFALL

- 3.3. The Issues and Options consultation document suggested that 78,000 houses are required in the Black Country between 2014 and 2036 (3,545 dpa). However, an early assessment of available capacity to accommodate this number of dwellings indicated that not all of this development could be accommodated within the established urban area. It was suggested that a 22,000 dwelling shortfall of what is needed against what can be reasonably be accommodated existed.
- 3.4. Since the publication of the Issues and Options consultation in 2017, the Councils have been producing various evidence based documents and completed a revised Urban Capacity Study, that was published in December 2019. It concluded that there is a total housing shortfall of 29,288 dwellings in the period of 2019/20 to 2037/38. This is based on a local housing needs figure of 71,459 dwellings and a total housing supply of 42,171 dwellings.
- 3.5. This conclusion does, however, pre-date the changes to the Standard Method. The Standard Method is the approach local authorities should use to establishing the minimum housing requirement in their Local Plans. Under the changes to the Standard Method introduced late last year the 20 largest cities and urban areas have a 35% uplift to their housing requirement. This would apply to Wolverhampton. This increases the overall housing requirement for the Black Country Authority areas from 71,459 to 76,460. This has the result of the increasing the housing shortfall to 34,289 dwellings.
- 3.6. The most recent changes to the Standard Method thus indicate that

the shortfall is over 34,000 dwellings instead of the 22,000 dwellings initially acknowledged in the Issues and Options consultation. This highlights a significant shortfall in the ability of the Black Country authorities to be able to accommodate its housing needs within its own administrative area. In order for the housing needs of the Black Country to be met in full this will require cross boundary co-operation with its neighbouring authorities in order for them to make land available to meet this unmet need.

- 3.7. Before looking to go cross boundary to try and resolve this issue, the Black Country authorities will need to demonstrate that they have assessed and exhausted all potential sources of land for housing in their own administrative areas, before asking its neighbouring authorities to accommodate some or part of its unmet housing needs. To date, the shortfall has been assessed against the capacity of sites within the urban area and has not yet made any meaningful assessment of the contribution that Green Belt land within the Black Country could make to meeting housing needs. The Promotor contends that before any of the other HMA authorities are asked to accommodate any of the Black Country's unmet needs that they first carry out a full and comprehensive review of the Green Belt. In doing so, this will hopefully identify some additional housing capacity that will reduce the identified shortfall below the current figure of 34,289 dwellings.
- 3.8. The land at Worcester Lane, Pedmore is currently located in the Green Belt although in light of the need to identify all potential sources of suitable land for development before looking beyond the Black Country, we contend that it should be assessed for its suitability to be removed from the Green Belt and to be allocated for residential development.
- 3.9. In order to secure support from the adjoining authorities to accommodate any of the Black Country's unmet housing needs, demonstrating that the Black Country authorities have exhausted all potential sources of supply of housing, including land in the Green Belt, will be critical to achieving any form of agreement.

#### THE BIRMINGHAM SHORTFALL

- 3.10. The four Black Country authority areas lie within the Greater Birmingham HMA, which totals 14 Councils. The largest of which is Birmingham City Council. Due to its size and role in the West Midlands region the other HMA authorities have a clear functional relationship with Birmingham in terms of it providing employment opportunities along with shops, services and entertainment facilities.
- 3.11. Issues around Birmingham's housing needs and its ability to meet these within its own administrative area are well documented. The adopted Birmingham Development Plan (BDP) identifies a total housing requirement of 89,000 dwellings but a shortfall of 37,900 dwellings to the year 2031. In adopting the BDP, the onus was

on the City Council to work with the remaining authorities in the HMA to agree how the shortfall would be accommodated in the emerging Plans for these authorities. To date, little progress has been made with only 16,790 dwellings being proposed to meet the shortfall as per the Figure below.

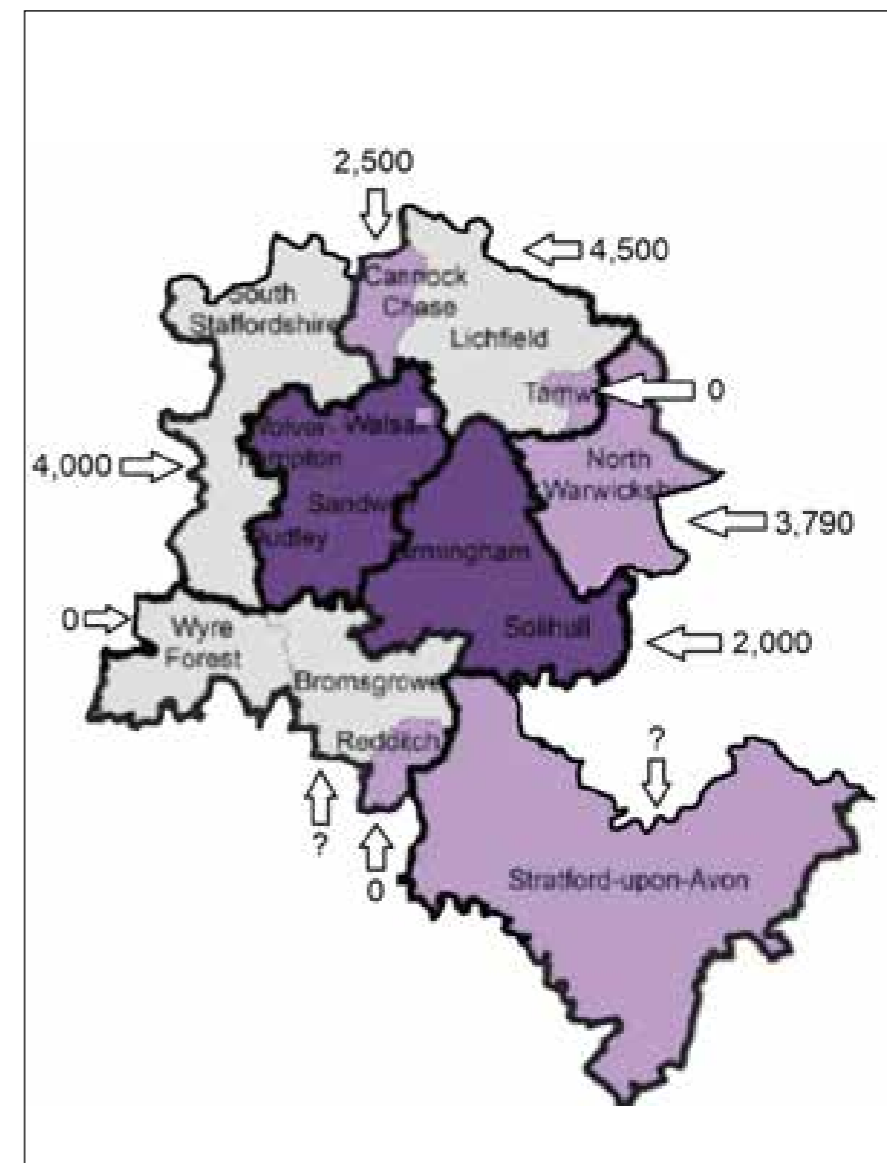


Figure 2: Map identifying housing shortfall

3.12. As it stands, there is still a shortfall of 21,110 dwellings across the HMA against meeting Birmingham's unmet needs. If the Black Country's shortfall is added in to this, it would increase the number of dwellings that are needed but not yet identified to be accommodated somewhere within the HMA to 48,110 dwellings. A significant shortfall indeed, which reinforces the need for the Black Country Plan to examine and assess all potential sources of land, including Green Belt, in order to minimise the need to look cross boundary to make up any shortfall.

## **PLANNING WHITE PAPER / CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO THE STANDARD METHOD**

3.13. As noted above, the Government recently concluded consultation on the Planning White Paper. The Planning White Paper set out a number of proposed changes to the planning system principally in order to facilitate the delivery of future housing growth. Whilst the consultation has only recently concluded it is too early to say which of the measures proposed will be formally implemented. In advance of these, the Black Country authorities will need to continue with its plan preparation under the current system.

3.14. Alongside the changes to the planning system, the Government also consulted on changes to the standard method for calculating housing need. The need to look again at the standard method has arisen because of the Government's objective of delivering 300,000 dwellings per year, an increase from the 240,000 that is currently sought.

3.15. Following the conclusion of the consultation on the proposed changes to the standard method, the Government published its response to it in December 2020. In short, the Government have decided in large not to pursue the changes that were proposed as part of the consultation and that the standard method will remain largely as it was when first created in 2017, which is based on applying the 2014-based household projections, with a percentage uplift to reflect the price-income affordability of housing, subject to the 40% cap.

3.16. Whilst the standard method will not be amended significantly, the Government is looking to apply a 'cities and urban centre uplift' of 35% to the capped need figure generated by the existing standard method in the top 20 largest cities and urban centres. Birmingham and Wolverhampton are two Cities where it will be applied and which are both in the same HMA as the other Black Country authorities.

3.17. In respect of Wolverhampton its minimum housing need will increase from 750 dpa to 1,013 dpa whilst for Birmingham its minimum housing need will increase from 4,450 dpa to 4,829 dpa. This represents an annual increase in these two local authority areas of 642 dwellings, which over a 20 year plan period equates to 12,840 dwellings.

3.18. As we have set out above, the inability of Birmingham City to meet its own housing needs in the current plan period is well documented and the emerging shortfall in the Black Country is only going to be compounded by the uplift that Wolverhampton is now expected to accommodate.

3.19. The changes to the standard method whilst principally affecting Wolverhampton and Birmingham are likely to increase wider pressure on the delivery of new housing across the HMA and for the other HMA authorities to potentially have to make more land available to meet the needs of the HMA. This reinforces again the need for the Black Country authorities to assess and determine all sources of land, including Green Belt, for its suitability to be released to meet future housing needs.

## **THE NEED FOR A GREEN BELT REVIEW**

3.20. The position in the Black Country is that there is an emerging housing need that cannot be met in full within the four Black Country authorities and that the shortfall currently stands at approximately 27,000 dwellings in the period up to 2036.

3.21. To address this shortfall, the Promoter contends that all sources of land within the Black Country should be assessed for their suitability to be released for housing. This includes reviewing the Green Belt.

3.22. In doing so, the Councils can identify as much as land as possible that can be released for development in the Black Country and doing so, minimise the amount of land that will need to be released in adjoining authorities to meet any unmet need arising in the Black Country.

3.23. The situation in the Black Country authorities is compounded by the situation in Birmingham and further compounded by the Government's decision for Wolverhampton and Birmingham to deliver further growth over and above the current standard method housing requirement.

3.24. The conclusion we draw is that all available sources of land will need to be identified in order to minimise the size of the shortfall. As part of this process, a review of the Green Belt will also be needed and that land will need to be released from the Green Belt in the Black Country first, if any agreement is to be reached with the other HMA authorities for them to accommodate any of the Black Country's unmet housing needs.

3.25. In doing so, the land at Worcester Lane, Pedmore, is one such site in the Green Belt that should be considered. The remainder of this document sets out the case for why development at the site would be appropriate and how it can contribute to the delivery of new housing to meet the needs of the Black Country in the period up to 2036.

## 4. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

### SITE DESCRIPTION

- 4.1. The site is located on the southern edge of the built up area of the Black Country conurbation within the Pedmore district of Dudley Borough. It is roughly triangular in shape and orientated on a north south axis with it being wider at its southern extent and narrowing to its northern most tip. The site slopes gently down from south to north. The area of the site is approximately 3.1 hectares.
- 4.2. The site is bound by Worcester Lane to the east, the Kidderminster to Stourbridge railway line to the west and a field boundary made up of bushes, hedging and mature trees to the south. A post and wire fence encloses the site along its southern and eastern boundaries whilst the railway and its associated fencing and boundary treatments form the western boundary.
- 4.3. Worcester Lane has a footpath that runs along the extent of the site on its western side. A number of mature trees are planted in the verge on Worcester Lane along the extent of the site's boundary, which coupled with boundary planting screen views into the site. Worcester Lane is subject to a 40 mph speed limit.
- 4.4. The site is crossed east west roughly in the middle of it by a public bridleway that links from Worcester Lane to the existing residential development on Quarry Park Road on the western side of the railway line, via a footbridge over the railway.
- 4.5. The character of the surrounding area on Worcester Lane and to the west of Quarry Park Road is residential in nature, formed of larger detached dwellings set well back from the road and in generous plots. A new housing development has been developed on Bell Meadow which is also mainly detached properties with off street parking and large gardens. Open countryside lies to the south and south west.
- 4.6. The centre of Pedmore is located approximately 800 metres walking distance to the north east of site where there is a primary school, convenience store and public house. Pedmore High School is located on Hagley Road approximately 1 kilometre from the site.
- 4.7. The village of Hagley is located approximately 650 metres to the south of the site where there are other local services, including a senior school and train station.
- 4.8. Old Swinford is located approximately 1.3 kilometres to the north and Stourbridge town centre is approximately 2.2 kilometres to the north, where a range of other local shops, services and facilities are present.
- 4.9. The nearest large employment areas are located to the north between Stourbridge and Cradley Heath, approximately 2.5 kilometres from the site, whilst further employment opportunities are available in Halesowen to the east and Kidderminster to the south west. Birmingham City Centre is located approximately 16

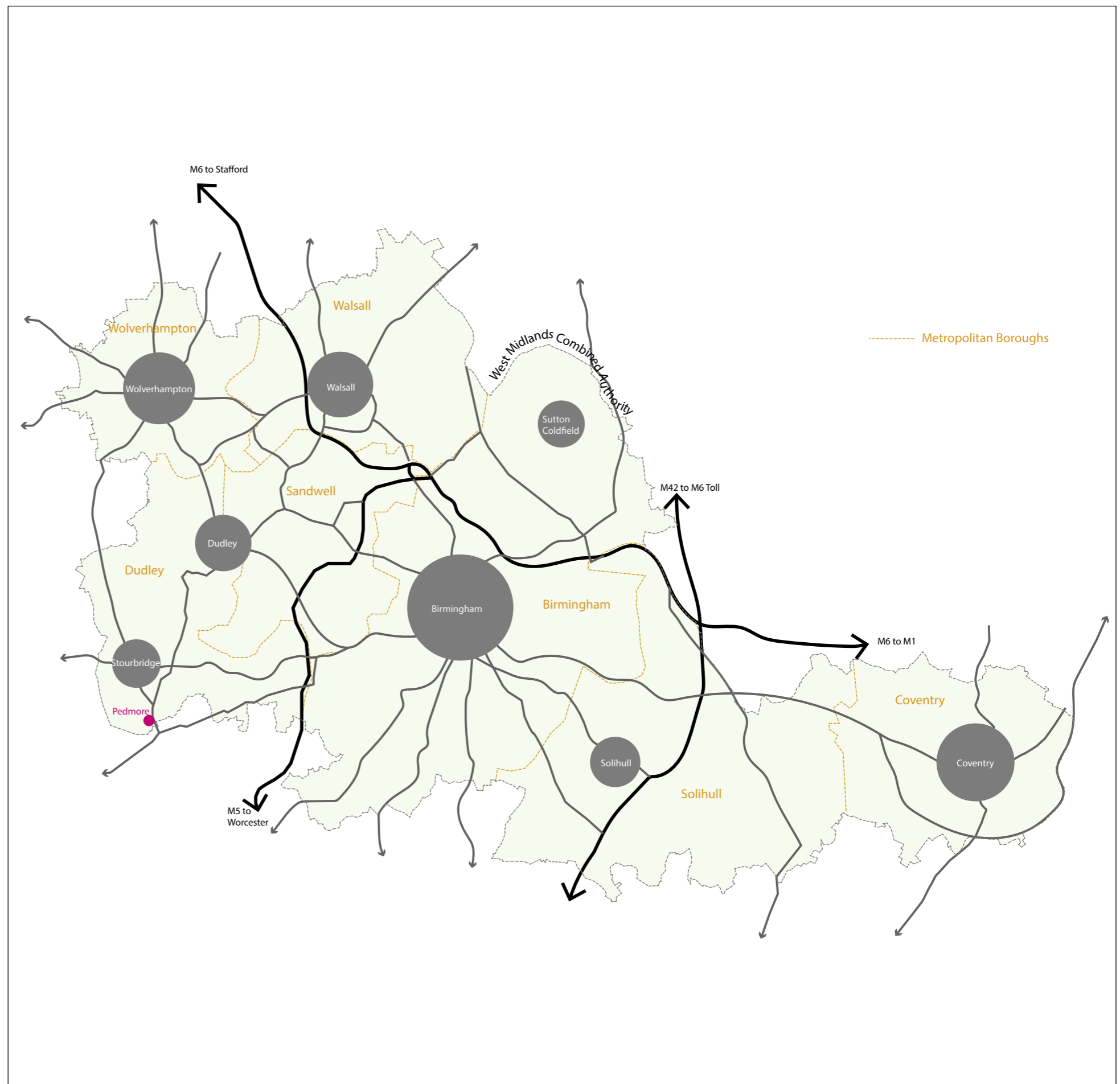


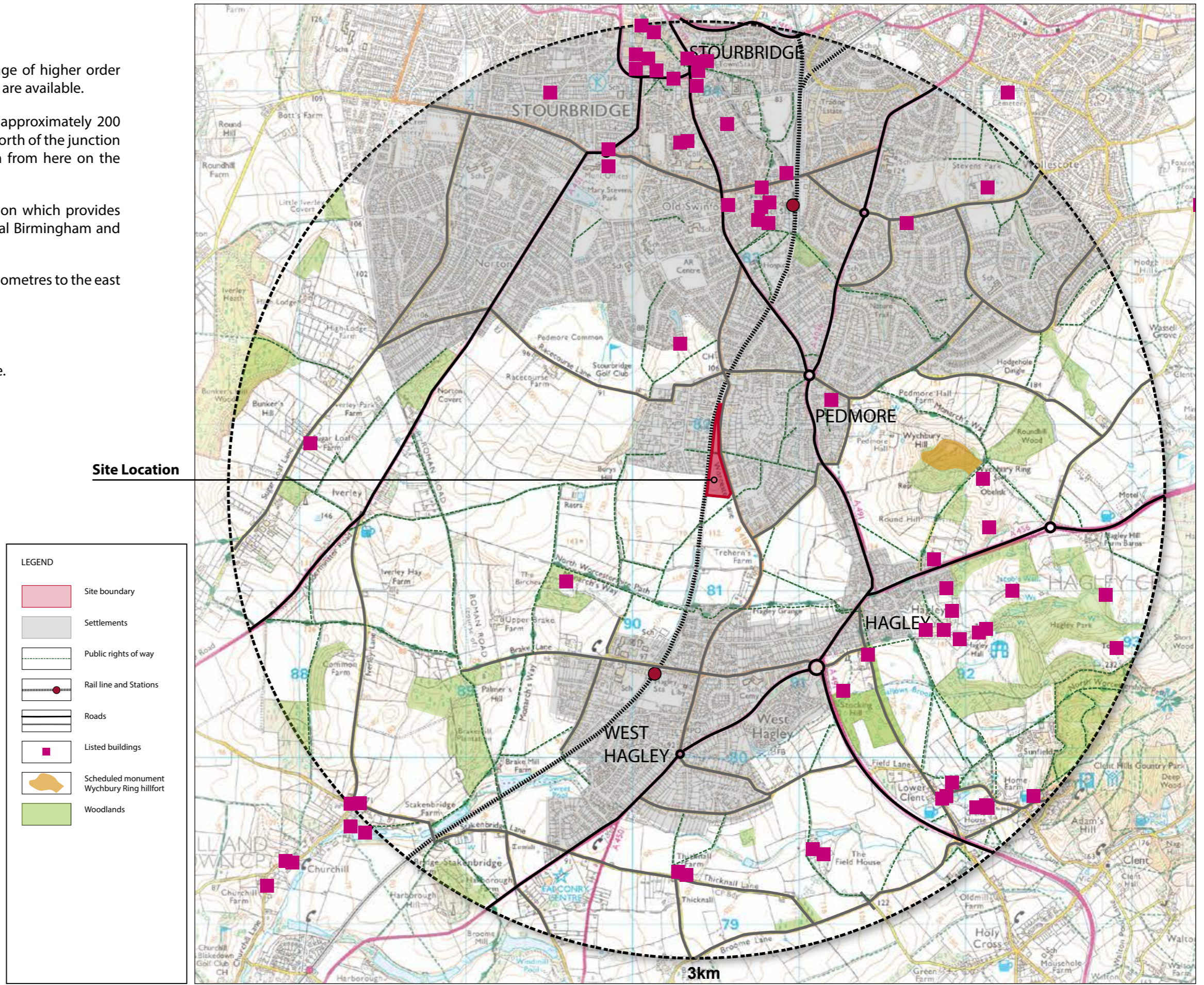
Figure 3: Regional Context Plan

kilometres to the east of the site, where a range of higher order shops, services and employment opportunities are available.

- 4.10. The nearest bus stops to the site are located approximately 200 metres to the north on Worcester Lane, to the north of the junction with Redlake Road. Services 10A and 10C run from here on the Stourbridge Norton circular route.
- 4.11. The nearest train station is Stourbridge Junction which provides services to the rest of the Black Country, central Birmingham and south to Kidderminster.
- 4.12. The M5 motorway is located approximately 9 kilometres to the east and accessible via junction 3.

**RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.13. There is no relevant planning history on the site.



**Figure 4: Site Context Plan**



## 5. ASSESSMENT OF SITE BASELINE

- 5.1. The environmental capacity of the Site has been investigated through a combination of Site assessment and desk study. The following sections summarises the findings of the landscape, transport, flood risk and drainage and heritage work.

### FLOODING AND DRAINAGE

#### Flood Risk

- 5.2. According to the Environment Agency's flood map for planning, the site is located in Flood Zone 1, an area with low probability of flooding.
- 5.3. See extract of flood map opposite.
- 5.4. According to the Environment Agency's surface water flood risk modelling, it is apparent that there is a high risk of surface water flooding within a small area of the site at its northern most extent. It is also apparent that there is a low to medium risk of surface water flooding along the adjacent rail line and Worcester Lane. See the extract of surface water modelling opposite.
- 5.5. Based on the level of flood risk identified for the site, there is extremely limited constraint presented to development. Furthermore, the area within the site at which a high risk of surface water flooding has been identified will not form part of the developable area and will remain as open space.
- 5.6. With the incorporation of an appropriate drainage strategy, the development will not increase the risk or exacerbate any on or off-site flooding.

#### Drainage

- 5.7. The geological records for the site indicate a high surface water infiltration potential. Furthermore, there is a surface water sewer located along Worcester Lane should a connection be required. There is also a foul sewer located along Worcester Lane, which also presents opportunity for a foul water connection.

### AIR QUALITY

- 5.8. The main air quality contribution to the area will be from the local highway network.
- 5.9. Through the implementation of dust related mitigation measures during the construction phase, it is anticipated any impacts would be temporary and not significant.
- 5.10. With the anticipated acceptable air quality concentrations in the locality of the site and the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures, it is anticipated that the impacts associated with the operational phase of a future residential development can be mitigated to within an acceptable level. Air quality is not considered to be a constraint to development.

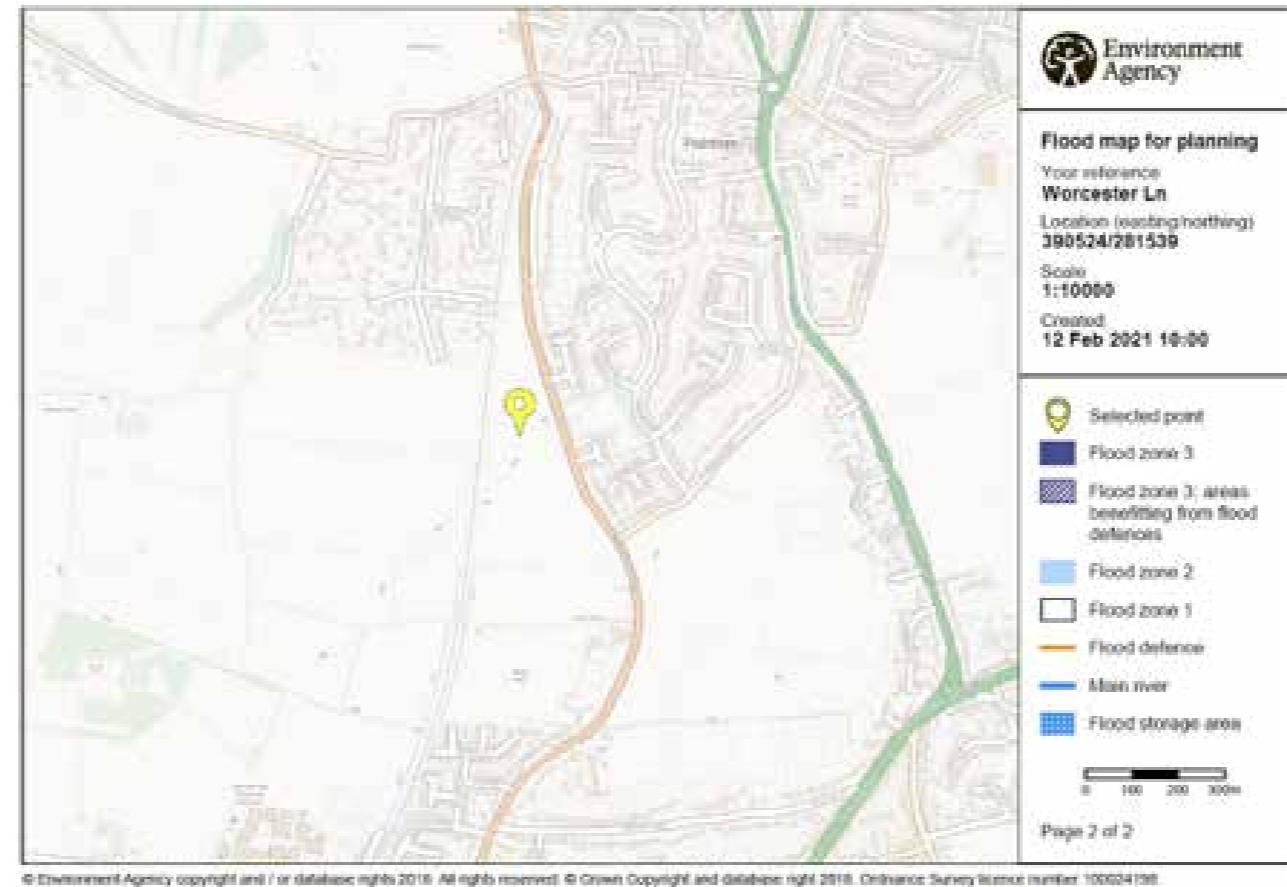


Figure 5: Extract of Flood Map



Figure 6: Extract of Surface Water Modelling

## TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS

### Location and Immediate Highway Network

- 5.11. The B4187 Worcester Lane forms the western boundary of the site and a rail line the eastern. There is a public bridleway that defines northern and southern sections of the site. The bridleway crosses the rail line and continues to the west and on the opposite side of Worcester Lane to the east.
- 5.12. Approximately 250m to the north of the site, Worcester Lane forms the northern and southern arms of the four-arm signal-controlled junction with Racecourse Lane and Red Lake Road. Pedestrian crossing facilities are provided at the junction.
- 5.13. Worcester Lane continues to the north and junctions with A491 Hagley Road at its northern extent. Worcester Lane continues to the south until its junction with Worcester Road, Station Road and Park Road. The junction is signal-controlled, Worcester Lane forming the northern arm, and pedestrian crossing facilities provided.

### Access

- 5.14. There are opportunities to provide new vehicle and pedestrian access across the frontage of the site along Worcester Lane.
- 5.15. The visibility requirement for the vehicle access junction has been determined based on speed survey results. In consideration of scale of development and vehicle flow along Worcester Lane, the provision of a simple priority-controlled junction will likely be sufficient for the development. The access junction and associated visibility can be accommodated across a section of site frontage.
- 5.16. The site integrates directly with the footpath along the eastern side of Worcester Lane. The development would likely present opportunity to improve a section of the footpath.

### Highway Safety

- 5.17. Online accident data has been reviewed for the most recent five-year period for which data is available and it is evident that very few accidents have occurred across the immediate highway network and none have occurred adjacent to the site. There is no apparent reason to suggest that development within the site and provision of a new vehicle access will cause or exacerbate any highway safety issues.

### Accessibility

- 5.18. The site integrates with a footpath along the eastern side of Worcester Lane. In the proximity of the northern extent of the site boundary a network of street lighting commences and continues to the north.
- 5.19. The nearest bus stop to the site is located within an approximate

walking distance of 350m along Worcester Lane to the north. The bus stops are currently incorporated by the 10C Stourbridge to Norton Circular.

- 5.20. The site is located within approximately, 1.5km walking / cycle distance of Stourbridge Junction rail station to the north and Hagley station to the south. Both stations are located on the Worcester to Leamington line operated by West Midlands Railway, which incorporates stations within Birmingham city centre. Certain trains operated by Chiltern Railways, which travel between Kidderminster and London, also stop at the stations.
- 5.21. The site is located within approximately 1km walking/cycle distance of local amenities located within the Oldswinford area of Stourbridge. Furthermore, within 1.2km walk/cycling distance of the commercial centre of Hagley village.

## GROUND CONDITIONS

- 5.22. A Phase 1 Ground Investigation has been undertaken to assess and report on the findings with respect to potential ground contamination and potential associated future liabilities in accordance with the Preliminary Risk Assessment procedure outlined in Land Contamination Risk Management.
- 5.23. The historical map extracts reviewed from 1882 to 2021 shows that the site has never been developed and remained unchanged.
- 5.24. Reference to the British Geological Survey (BGS) Map extracts indicates the site to directly overlie bedrock geology of the Helsby Sandstone Formation (Sandstone). No superficial deposits are noted on-site on the geological maps. Based on the published geology and hydrogeology maps, soakaway drainage is considered likely to be a suitable drainage solution for the proposed development.
- 5.25. No potentially significant sources of contamination were identified with regard to the proposed development and the risk of significant contamination impact in relation to the proposed development is considered to be Negligible. As such, an intrusive investigation is not currently recommended however this may be required in order to inform foundation and drainage design at a later date.

## NOISE

- 5.26. An assessment of the existing noise environment surrounding the site has been undertaken and confirms that the existing noise climate is dominated by the local highway network.
- 5.27. The assessment used predictive modelling of the potential operational noise impacts based upon the traffic data supplied by the project transport consultant and indicated that the likely future residential development will not result in any significant increase in noise at existing receptor locations.

- 5.28. The assessment of the potential impact of noise on the future residential development is anticipated to show that most of the site can achieve the required criteria without onerous acoustic measures and while there is potential for higher noise levels on the most exposed boundaries / facades, acoustic design options can be considered through 'mitigation by design' measures during the master planning stage to aid in reducing future exposure. Noise is not considered to be a constraint to development.

## LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

### Landscape Character

- 5.29. The Landscape Character of England is divided into a series of character areas representing broad tracts of landscape which share common characteristics. The site is located within the National Character Area (NCA) 66: Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau.
- 5.30. The local landscape character are described within the Borough-Wide Urban Historic Landscape Characterisation Study by Dudley Borough Council (March 2016). The study finds that the site falls with the Major Character Area of Pedmore Common which is described as:  
*Forming the remainder of the southern Green Belt west of Pedmore over the sandstone, the rural character of this area can be traced back to agricultural enclosures of the medieval landscape in the 18th century including parkland around Pedmore Hall and Hagley Hall.*
- 5.31. The study also falls into a Landscape Heritage Area and an Area of High Historic Landscape Value (HLV16) Buckbury:  
*Racecourse lane runs through the centre of this LHA. To the north of Racecourse Lane is surviving ridge and furrow and there are earthworks on the south side of Racecourse Lane. The LHA is bounded to its west by Pedmore Roman Road (HER 4851) which was the site of a Roman Road running from Droitwich to Greensforge. The morphology of the features along the west-south-west boundary of the borough is of a narrow holloway.*

- 5.32. However it is worth noting that the site is on the boundary of these landscape character and value areas and also adjacent to the settlement edge of Pedmore which also influence the site and setting of the site.

### Landscape Effects

- 5.33. The assessment of the potential effects on the landscape concludes that there will be an immediate change in the character within the site boundary as the proposed development and associated infrastructure are introduced. There is potential for any identified effects being reduced over time through the introduction of any proposed planting within the site and enhancements to the existing landscape framework matures.

5.34. The existing vegetated boundaries are to be retained and the setting of the site will benefit from any proposed enhancements and additional planting along the boundaries. The proposed development is likely to have a negligible effect on the broader landscape character. However, the landscape proposals are also considered to be potentially beneficial as they will enhance the existing buffer planting into the proposed scheme. This will increase the opportunity to provide ecological enhancements and increased biodiversity to the area.

**Visual Effects**

5.35. A visual assessment demonstrated that the proposed development will have some minor effects on road users directly adjacent to the site and receptors within the immediate vicinity of the site. The existing vegetation along the boundaries will be retained and enhanced and may offer filtered views to any proposed development. Intervening built form and extensive areas of woodland within the wider landscape screen the site from any medium and long range views. However the site will be viewed in context of the existing settlement edge of Pedmore and any proposed built form would not be incongruous to the setting.

**Landscape Strategy & Mitigation**

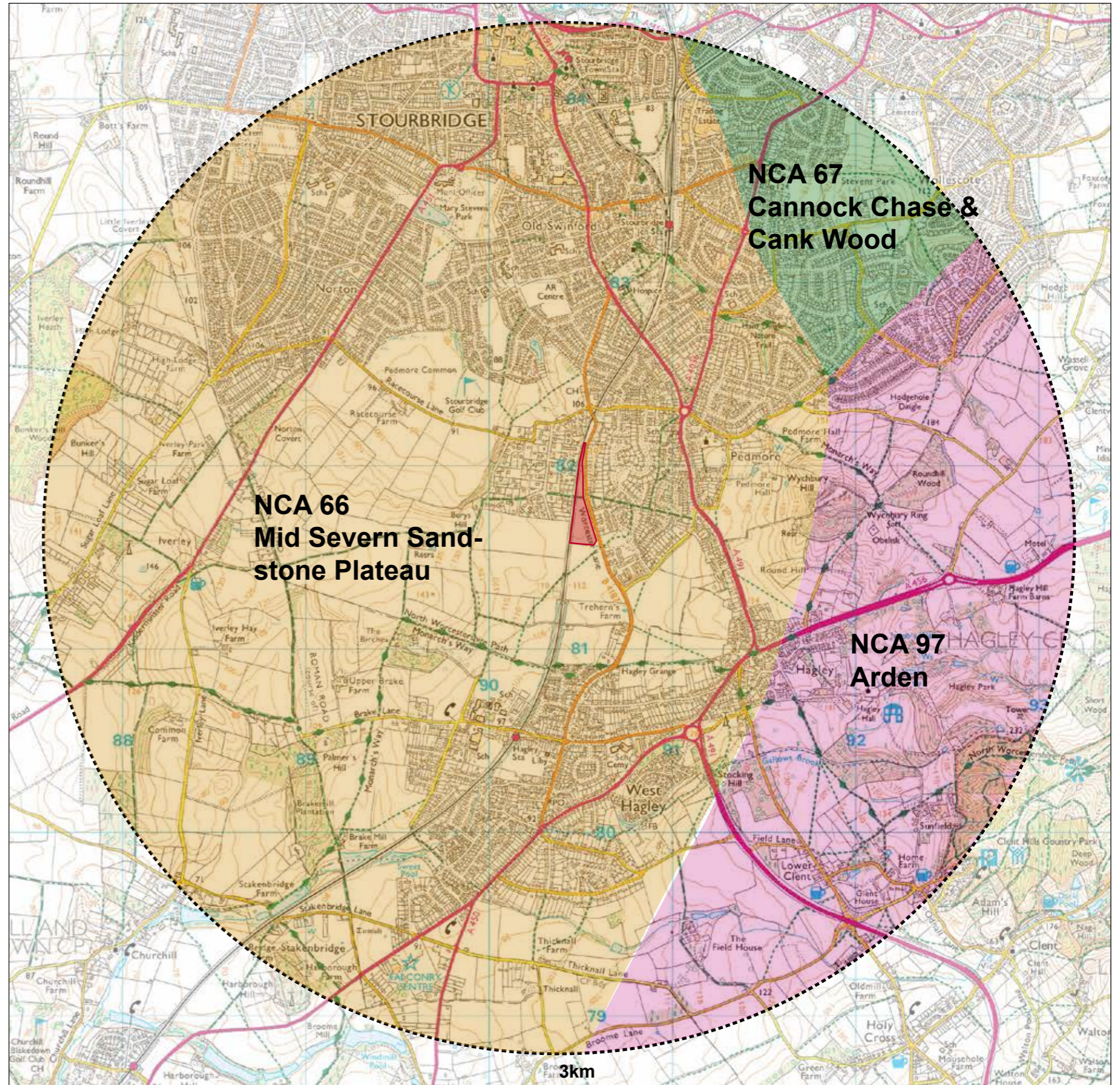
5.36. The design of the site layout will take the existing green infrastructure into account to provide a residential development, set within an already mature landscape structure.

5.37. There will be significant opportunities for new tree planting and landscaping within the site, and infill planting around the boundaries.

5.38. There will be an area of public open space to the north of the proposed development parcel which will restore and strengthen existing vegetated boundary treatments. Boundary treatments around the development parcel will also be retained and enhanced and therefore provide improvements to the gateway to Pedmore.

5.39. The basic elements of the landscape strategy for the site can be summarised as follows:

- Retention of the existing elements that make up the site’s green infrastructure, such as tree and hedges along the boundaries and integrating these into the development, giving the scheme an immediate sense of maturity;
- Ornamental and native hedge planting to be planted in and around the proposed development to soften the effects of the built form;
- High quality mixed native tree and hedge planting will be planted in and around the proposed public open space and along the access roads.
- The existing footpath at the centre of the site will be retained.



**Figure 7:** National Landscape Character Map

- Proposals seek to not only aesthetically enhance the existing settlement edge of Pedmore but increase biodiversity levels and the recreational and ecological value of the site.

5.40. The landscape strategy will be taken into account when considering the mitigation for any identified potential landscape and visual effects arising from the proposed development.

## ECOLOGY

5.41. An extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was completed in January 2021.

5.42. The rail line is designated as a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC) a small part of the designation intersects the northern tip of the site. There are several other SLINCs and two Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) within 2 km of the site, but these are sufficiently distant to not be affected by development of the site. There are no statutory designated sites within the search area

### Habitats

5.43. Semi-improved grassland - The majority of the site is an apparently species poor grassland, cut annually for hay or silage.

5.44. Species poor hedging - Low quality defunct hedging on the southern half of the east boundary. Recommend to retain and enhance.

5.45. Species rich hedging - A hedge with trees on the southern border which includes a variety of tree species. Recommend to retain and enhance.

5.46. Trees - Trees within the site are limited, but there are several mature trees just outside of the site boundary. These include a veteran oak to the south east of the site. Recommend to retain

5.47. Scrub - A few small areas of bramble, rose and tree scrub. Recommend Retain tree scrub in northern point of the site as this is within the SINC.

### Species

5.48. The site's potential to support protected or rare species is somewhat limited. Those species / species groups which require consideration are as follows

5.49. Invertebrates - none on site

5.50. Amphibians - There is one pond in proximity to the Site: at Trehem's Farm 396m south east of the site. Given the size of the site, this pond is sufficiently distant that if great crested newts breed there, they would not be impacted by development of the Site. No further assessment required.

5.51. Reptiles - Some, limited, potential for a small population of common reptiles to occur at the Site. A reptile survey should be conducted to confirm presence or likely absence of reptiles and inform mitigation. No significant development constraints are likely. If reptiles are present, mitigation could include trapping and translocating them to a receptor site.

5.52. Birds - The site is regularly disturbed by dog walkers and users of the bridleway. Birds may nest in the trees and hedges. No significant development constraints, but mitigation to avoid damaging active nests may be required.

5.53. [REDACTED]

5.54. Bats - Bats may use the rail cutting for foraging and as a commuting route. Bats may roost in trees to the immediate north of the site and in a veteran oak to the immediate south east of the site. No further assessment None (unless wildlife corridors cannot be protected, in which case surveys may be needed to ascertain the level of any impact). Protection of the SLINC should focus on preventing light spill on the SLINC area and into the rail cutting.

### Opportunities

5.55. The development should aim to achieve net biodiversity gain in line with the national planning policy.

5.56. Trees and hedgerows should be retained where possible and enhanced. In particular the west boundary of the site (which is adjacent to the SLINC) should be improved as a wildlife corridor through appropriate tree and shrub planting. The veteran tree to the south east of the site should be protected beyond its root protection zone. Ideally this tree, the southern tree line and the west boundary will be significantly buffered from development to form a green corridor with the SLINC and strengthen links between the SLINC and the park south east of the Site

5.57. The following plan shows the SLINC and a potential green corridor.



Figure 8: Ecology SLINC Plan



## 6. CONSTRAINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

6.1. The constraints and opportunities associated with the proposed development have been identified following the assessment of the Site and its surroundings as detailed at Section 5.

6.2. These are shown on the constraints and opportunities plan opposite.

6.3. This assessment of the Site and its surroundings has informed the design proposals.

### Opportunities and Benefits

6.4. The site is located in a parcel of land the sits between two residential areas and development here would not be incongruous to its setting and an extension to the existing settlement edge.

6.5. The boundaries of the site are densely vegetated which would create a mature landscape framework for the proposed development.

6.6. Opportunity to enhance the setting of the SLINC and introduce a landscape buffer between it and the development which would retain and enhance the existing wildlife corridors. Enhancing the existing landscape buffers and introducing planting within the scheme would look to create a net biodiversity gain in line with national planning policy.

6.7. The site is relatively visually contained and would not cause visual harm to surrounding receptors, however any proposed built form will be viewed in context of the existing settlement edge. This is demonstrated in the following viewpoints.



SLINC area can be accommodated within the proposals and enhanced through introducing a landscape buffer between the proposed developable area and the wildlife corridor

Area most suitable for POS and attenuation basin.

Retain the footpath to maintain permeability

Area most suitable for development

Access direct from Worcester Lane

Existing sub station to be retained and screened by vegetation

Access to wider recreational network

Figure 9: Opportunities and Constraints Plan



**Viewpoint 1:** Looking in a north westerly direction across the northern portion of the site



**Viewpoint 2:** Looking in a south westerly direction across the southern portion of the site with Worcester Lane on the left and the rail line to the right



**Viewpoint 3:** Looking in a westerly direction across the northern portion of the site towards Worcester Lane at the point where the public footpath crosses the site



**Viewpoint 4:** Looking in a north westerly direction across the site with the rail line running the western perimeter on the left



**Viewpoint 5:** Located on Worcester Lane looking in a north easterly direction across the northern portion of the site



**Viewpoint 6:** Located on Worcester Lane looking in a north easterly direction with filtered views across the southern portion of the site

## 7. CONCEPT MASTERPLAN

7.1. The Concept Masterplan sets out the broad design principles and parameters for the development off Worcester Lane.

### Development Proposals

7.2. The overall vision for the Site is to provide a sustainable development comprising of up to 72 dwellings, whilst respecting and enhancing the Site's environmental assets and its immediate landscape context.

7.3. The scheme would provide a choice of housing to meet the needs of the area.

7.4. The vision responds to current conditions and future needs with the overall aim of providing high quality housing, open space and play facilities. Proposed built development will be well integrated within the local landscape, with a comprehensive green infrastructure framework building upon the established landscape features.

7.5. A combination of design guidance and Site assessment have been used to establish the following broad design principles:

- 72 dwellings at 30dph comprising a mix of house sizes, style and tenure;
- New areas of multi-functional Green Infrastructure;
- Provision of new pedestrian connections south towards village centre;
- Enhanced settlement edge of Pedmore;
- Provision of public open space with enhanced ecological buffers;
- Creation of attenuation features on Site to accommodate surface water runoff and discharges into existing watercourses at greenfield run off rates.



Grassland area to be public open space with the potential to introduce additional tree planting and enhance the strong landscape buffer (SLINC) along the rail line.

Attenuation basin located in the POS as part of SuDS.

Public footpath to be retained and allow continued permeability

Potential development parcel - high quality materials with street tree planting and appropriate boundary treatments to create an attractive gateway to Pedmore.

Proposed access point from Worcester Lane

Buffer planting around the sub station retained and enhanced to screen the station

Retain vegetation and enhance the landscape boundary screening any proposed built form.

Figure 10: Concept Parameter Plan



## 8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1. This Vision Document has been prepared to support the promotion of land at Worcester Lane, Pedmore. The site is being promoted for residential development in the emerging Black Country Plan and is considered suitable for removal from the Green Belt and to be developed to meet the housing needs of the Black Country in the period up to 2036.
- 8.2. The Black Country Authorities are currently preparing a new Plan to replace the BCCS and as part of this process are reassessing its development needs including the number of new homes that will be required. In doing so, the use of the standard method as required by the Framework and PPG has been employed to determine the minimum housing need figure. Having also undertaken a more recent assessment of available housing land capacity it is clear that sufficient land is not currently available within the urban area to meet its minimum needs. As such, the Promoter contends that all sources of land including land in the Green Belt needs to be considered first before the four authorities look to their neighbours for them to accommodate any of their unmet needs. As such, we are advocating that a Green Belt review is undertaken and that sites such as the land at Worcester Lane are fully considered for their suitability to be removed from the Green Belt and to be developed for housing.
- 8.3. The issues facing the Black Country are compounded by a similar issue that is also facing Birmingham City, in that it to has unmet housing needs that it needs to accommodate elsewhere within the HMA. Essentially five authorities are looking to agree with the remaining authorities in the HMA that these will accommodate unmet housing needs arising in the HMA. To date, very little agreement has been reached and the proposals have individual authorities have made to accommodate some of this need fall well short of what is actually needed to meet it in full.
- 8.4. In our view, the situation that the HMA faces reinforces the need for the Black Country authorities, and particularly Dudley MBC, to look at all possible sources of land within its administrative area including the Green Belt to determine whether any can be released to meet future housing needs.
- 8.5. We consider the site at Worcester Lane as contributing a negligible role to the function of the Green Belt in this location and its removal from it, would not in our view undermine the wider functions of including land in the Green Belt.
- 8.6. The site itself is located in Pedmore which is located on the southern edge of the Black Country within the District of Dudley. It is a sustainable settlement with a range of facilities present including both a primary and secondary school, both of which are located within walking distance of the site. Stourbridge is within 2.5 kilometres of the site where a range of higher order shops, services and facilities are present. A good range of public transport is accessible within easy reach of the site including both bus and train services.

- 8.7. The land at Worcester Lane will deliver a range of benefits including:
- The opportunity to deliver circa. 72 dwellings across a variety of house types and tenures
  - Creation of high quality residential environment
  - Being accessible to existing shops and facilities, including a primary and secondary school
  - Creation of a cohesive and vibrant residential community
  - Creation of new areas of public open space
- 8.8. The site will deliver new sustainable development that will meet the housing needs of the District over the Plan Period. The site is available, suitable and deliverable and Worcester Lane Limited remain committed to bringing it forward for development



