

**Options for Future Urban Expansion in Warwick District
Considerations for Sustainable Landscape Planning
2014 Addendum**



**Appendix A
Possible approaches to development at three
proposed housing allocation sites.**

1. Land at Campion Hills Recreation Ground, Lillington, Leamington Spa.

1.1.1 This site is located within the West Midlands Green Belt and was therefore included in the Joint Green Belt Study (JGBS - 2008). The site was part of a much larger land parcel at the eastern edge of Leamington.

JGBS Study Findings - 2008:

Study Area Description	WL11 is essentially a small ridge of land at the east end of Leamington and defined by a loop of the River Leam as it meanders west to meet the River Avon. It is defined by the river course to the east and south, farmland towards Cubbington to the north and the edge of the urban area at Campion Hills to the west.
Landscape Character	WL11 is within the <i>Dunsmore and Feldon</i> character area. The landscape character type is the <i>Feldon Plateau Fringe</i> .
Visual Issues	The ridge (Campion Hills) at the west end of the area is one of the highest parts of Leamington and has telecommunications and water infrastructure. Visual connections also with Offchurch and the A425 corridor to Radford Semele.
Historic and Cultural Issues	No historical information gathered. Newbold Comyn park laid out in the Regency period. Extensive public access including the Shakespeare Way long distance path.
Ecological Features	A large area of public parkland, golf course, hedges and trees permanent pasture and the River Leam local nature reserve.
Landscape Condition	A range of management strategies apparent.
Conclusion	This area has been developed as a recreational and conservation orientated section of the Green Belt and appropriate development in this area is likely to be related to those landuse types. We recommend WL11 is wholly retained within the Green Belt.

1.1.2 The site was not included in the WDC 2012 SHLAA.

1.2.0 2014 Review:

1.2.1 General: WDC have identified a small area of the Campion Hills recreation ground (approximately 1.2 Ha in area) which is considered to be underutilised as recreation space. It lies close to the existing residential estate at Lillington (Leicester Street / Buckley Road – circa 1960s) and development here would form a small extension to the existing settlement footprint. It is anticipated that the site might have a capacity for between 40 and 50 new dwellings depending on likely residential densities and infrastructure requirements.

1.2.2 To the north the site has a boundary with Black Lane and housing on Marston Close which is accessed from Buckley Road. To the north-west the site is defined by Leicester Street which appears to be a main distributor road for the Lillington estate, which extends north and west for more than 1.5km. To the east the site is adjoined by the Campion Hills Allotment Association site and 250m beyond this a large Severn Trent water treatment plant, which is accessed along Black Lane. There is a tall telecommunication tower in the south-east corner of the site – and this is a notable local landmark. To the south and south-west the space is defined by elements of the Campion Hills public open space including a block of woodland (partially fenced) and a BMX cycle play facility. Wide, panoramic views over Leamington, towards Whitnash and Heathcote, are a notable characteristic of the south-west corner of the site.

1.2.3 Existing Landscape: The site is essentially flat and lies at around 90m AOD. The site is predominantly mown grass, but central areas have apparently been partially reinforced with stone and tarmac and it is understood the area is sometimes used for parking and events. The resulting appearance is somewhat unkempt with some impeded drainage. Near the east allotment boundary

there is a cinder path/track used for public pedestrian access to the park, but also providing service access to the telecommunication mast. There are 10 mature trees in the mown grass near this boundary – 7 veteran oaks, 2 poplars and a beech tree that are important to the setting. To the north the boundary along Black Lane is enclosed by a 10-15m wide shelterbelt of mainly ash and blackthorn scrub woodland, but with seven large poplars and two veteran oaks within it. To the western edge of the space is a gated vehicular access from Leicester Street and a dual use path. This route appears to be a busy pedestrian and cycle thoroughfare – notably for the St Pauls Primary School, at Upper Holly Walk to the south. Beyond the path is more scrubby young mixed woodland which encloses the site, but also one large veteran oak tree. The south-east corner of the site is enclosed by woodland (including mature pine), but the BMX track is on sloping ground that falls away steeply to the south and allows the views noted previously.

1.2.4 Ecological / Historical: The area of mown grassland is expected to have little ecological value, but the adjacent woodland and especially the veteran trees can be expected to have moderate or high ecological value. The Champion Hills/Newbold Comyn public open space includes large areas managed for wildlife – including the Leam Valley nature reserve. No detailed historical information has been researched for the site. The large oak trees indicate the existence of a parkland setting here for at least 300 years and ‘ornamental’ woodland planting south-east of the site (including a large *Wellingtonia*) suggests 19th century parkland planning¹.

1.2.5 Potential Landscape and Visual Impacts: Appropriate design at this site would potentially have little landscape impact, pending further review of access and infrastructure requirements. It is assumed that existing vegetation around the site would be retained. In this case an indicative development of mainly two or possibly three storey houses would be visually enclosed from the adjacent residential areas to the north and north-west and from the public open space to the south-east. Development is likely to be distantly visible from parts of Leamington, Whitnash and Heathcote. It is not clear that there will be views of the development from the residential area immediately to the south (Holly Street, Princes Street, Upper Holly Walk) due to the local topography and tree cover. The development would be prominent from the adjacent public footpaths to the east and west and from the adjacent allotments.

1.2.6 What if ? If this site was brought forward for development, the following issues would need to be carefully considered:

- Although the site is underutilised and has limited amenity value, the development would constitute loss of public open space. It will be important to limit impacts to the wider POS setting and to maintain the access and management of the adjacent amenity areas and facilities, for the ongoing benefit of the community.
- It is assumed that safe vehicular access will be possible from Leicester Street. It will be important not to compromise the adjacent pedestrian/cycle access to the public open space (and school).
- Sustainable surface water drainage will ideally be integrated into the new development. It is not clear whether this will require attenuation ponds. If they are required it is likely to be towards the south-west corner of the site and would ideally be included within the development curtilage.
- The development design will need to achieve acceptable frontages with the adjacent open space – providing security and a level of privacy for the new residents, whilst successfully integrating the scheme with the amenity setting.

1.2.7 Potential development area ? Residential development at this site would lie adjacent to existing residential areas and community facilities. Proximity to these, the extensive open space and views across Leamington are likely to constitute a very desirable living environment. It is a

¹ The first *Wellingtonia (Sequoia)* seeds imported to England were collected in California in the 1850s.

predominantly flat site and there would appear to be few development constraints – pending detailed studies and infrastructure planning.

1.3.0 **Landscape Planning Issues:**

1.3.1 **Infrastructure requirements:** As noted, further studies will be required to confirm infrastructure requirements. If a second road access is required it might be problematic. The path/track at the east side of the site has a narrow gated access to Black Lane, framed by veteran trees. There would certainly be adverse landscape impacts if a second adoptable road entrance was required / provided here. Other infrastructure provision or off-site impacts would need to be assessed.

1.3.2 **Cumulative impacts:** The site is approximately 500m west of the Redhouse Farm preferred allocation site. With appropriate design at the Redhouse Farm site it is likely that development there will not be visually prominent from the south (Leamington, Sydenham or Radford Semele). The Champion Hills site is unlikely to be intervisible with the Redhouse Farm site due to the intermediate waterworks and mature tree cover, and it is unlikely that both sites will be visible from the same viewpoints to the south and in Leamington. However, any potential views from the south of development at either site would be partial, distant and within the context of other residential areas at Lillington. No other identified development is likely to have cumulative visual impacts with this site.

1.3.3 **Potential landscape and visual impacts:** Assuming a sensitively designed 2 and possibly 3 storey development at the Champion Hills site, the magnitude of landscape change is likely to be medium-high for public open space users. Although there should be little impact to existing landscape features, there will be the introduction of major new elements into the landscape which will leave the original landscape fundamentally changed. However the area of influence for such change will be relatively discrete and should not affect the wider parkland setting of Champion Hills. With sensitive design, visual impact for immediate residential neighbours is likely to be low as they will be substantially screened by existing vegetation, but again for transient park users passing the site, the magnitude of change will be medium-high and significance of the changes is likely to be moderate. The magnitude of change in views from Leamington is considered likely to be low and the significance of such changes to views to be slight or negligible. New development here might be distantly and partially visible but will be seen within a substantially ‘green’ setting of established tree cover and with existing residential development behind it.

1.4.0 **Conclusions:**

1.4.1 Pending more detailed review of possible site constraints and infrastructural requirements, development of this site is unlikely to intrude greatly on the Green Belt, the setting of Leamington and Lillington, or the amenity of the wider public open space at Champion Hills and Newbold Comyn Park.

Opportunities and Assets:

- Attractive ‘parkland’ setting apparently with adequate road access and proximity to existing services and facilities.
- Existing trees and mature boundary vegetation, southerly aspect and views over Leamington.
- It is suggested that a development scheme of two storey detached, semi-detached or terraced houses, with private garden areas and with access roads and parking areas internalised within the layout, would be the most appropriate design for this setting. It is possible that the north-east corner of the site might have potential for some three storey dwellings, pending further visual impact review.

Constraints and Challenges:

- To minimise adverse impacts to park users (including access and visual) and at the same time to provide an appropriate level of security and privacy for future residents. It is recommended

that very careful consideration be given to boundary treatments – using setbacks and private gardens to create ‘transitional’ areas between the public and private spaces. The amenity of the open space would be degraded by poor quality or dysfunctional boundary design and well-designed walls and railings are recommended.

- To protect and sustain the existing trees and woodland. Some trees (notably the mature poplars on the east and north boundaries) are reaching the end of their useful life. They may not be suitable to retain in a more intensified residential environment and should perhaps be replaced with appropriate native species. Other trees may need arboricultural inspection and pruning. The preponderance of ash in the adjacent woodland planting may become susceptible to *Chalara fraxinea* in future. It is recommended that the proposed development is used as a catalyst to review the adjacent woodland stands and that a long-term management plan is put in place to ensure the sustainable retention of this important tree cover (especially including the veteran trees), for heritage, biodiversity and amenity benefits.
- The above planning must allow for appropriate permanent access for ongoing tree and parkland management.
- Building setbacks must consider the root protection zones of existing trees. This will be particularly relevant on the eastern boundary. Retaining an attractive corridor here will also be important for public amenity as it is a principal access to the parkland (refer to sketch section).
- The BMX area is on a steep site that is unlikely to be suitable for development. It is envisaged that the BMX facility would be retained – but as noted above, setbacks and detailed design will be relevant to ensure a suitable interface with the proposed residential environment (refer to sketch section). The development might include a better quality boundary fence for the BMX enclosure.
- Design must protect and maintain the important public thoroughfare along the western edge of the development. Vehicular access to the site must not compromise existing safe cycle and pedestrian access.

2. Land NE of the Red House Farm Allocation, Lillington, Leamington Spa

2.1.1 This is located within the West Midlands Green Belt and was therefore included in the Joint Green Belt Study (JGBS - 2008). The site was part of a much larger land parcel at the eastern edge of Leamington.

JGBS Study Findings – 2008:

Study Area Description	WL10 is essentially the head of a small valley, which drains south to the River Leam. It is defined by the edge of urban Cubbington and Lillington and is defined by field boundaries to the south and Welsh Road to the south east. The large Thwaites engineering works is a notable feature in the locality.
Landscape Character	WL10 is within the <i>Dunsmore and Feldon</i> character area. The landscape character type is the <i>Feldon Plateau Fringe</i> – and is a very definable valley landscape with a tree lined valley bottom and permanent pasture. The setting is greatly influenced by the post war development of Lillington – which finishes at the ridge above the valley. The 14 floor Eden Court flats are particularly notable.
Visual Issues	An attractive valley setting – relatively open due to modern agriculture – but you cant get away from the Lillington backdrop. Visual connections with Offchurch to the south.
Historic and Cultural Issues	No historical information gathered. However Offchurch and Offchurch Bury are ancient settlements and there is a possible connection to the Saxon King Offa. A Saxon burial ground has been excavated near to the Church. Offchurch Bury was later a seat of the Earls of Aylesbury. WL10 and 11 both lie within the visual catchment of Offchurch. Footpaths including the Shakespeare Way long distance path.
Ecological Features	Watercourse, hedges and hedge trees, woodland, permanent pasture.
Landscape Condition	Reasonably good condition in valley – but the boundary of Lillington could be improved.
Conclusion	In general we feel that expansion of Leamington on this eastern boundary would be difficult to justify in landscape planning terms. However WL10, defined as it is by Lillington and Cubbington and on land that drops below the existing ridgeline settlement - could be quite visually contained. The lower valley will have flood risk constraints and ecological values – but it is conceivable that the upper slopes could be developed – and with sensitive design might enhance the existing situation. We recommend that this area is considered for further detailed study, but that the majority of it is retained within the Green Belt.

2.1.2 The site has not been included in the 2012 SHLAA. The adjoining ‘Land at Redhouse Farm’ was included in the 2012 SHLAA (L23) and reviewed in the original *Considerations for Sustainable Landscape Planning* report (2012). That 11.5 Ha site has now been confirmed as a preferred option site in the draft WDC Local Plan. WDC have been referring to the new site as ‘Land NE of the Red House Farm allocation’ – but for clarity and simplicity this addendum report has referred to the site as the ‘Lillington expansion area’ on drawings and photographs.

2.2.0 2014 Review:

2.2.1 General. WDC are considering this small area of farmland (approximately 2Ha) to allow a small easterly expansion of the Lillington residential estate - immediately adjacent the landmark multi-storey flats – Eden Court, Southorn Court and Ashton Court. The site will therefore be defined by the existing housing to the west and north-west, open farmland to the north and east and south-east and the existing Red House Farm allocation site to the south. Cubbington lies approximately 1km to the north-east.

2.2.3 Existing Landscape: The proposed site is part of a larger arable field. Much of the site is relatively flat and lies at around 90-95m AOD – a similar level to the existing adjacent housing at

Lillington and the north-east corner of the allocated Red House Farm site. However the northern third of the site falls away more steeply to the existing field boundary – which is estimated to be approximately 5m lower than the rest of the site. The northern boundary is defined by a low, flail-cut predominantly hawthorn hedge. The southern boundary is defined by a taller, overgrown ‘hedge’ (3-4m wide) with hawthorn, elder, holly, bramble with some ash trees to 8-10m tall. The boundary with the Lillington estate has become an overgrown rather dysfunctional boundary strip with bramble, broken sections of fencing, flytipping, informal paths but also some trees to 8-10m tall including sycamore, alder, birch and ash. Some of the boundary is defined by a slight bank, but it is difficult to ascertain the level change under the existing vegetation. To the east the present arable field continues for another 250m, falling away to around 70m AOD towards a farmstead – Glebe Farm.

2.2.4 Ecological / Historical: The arable land is likely to have limited ecological value, but the boundary hedges and hedge trees may have moderate ecological value. Landscape condition is fair but field agglomeration and hedge loss has probably taken place in the past and stumps have been noted in the locality suggesting hedge tree loss. The remaining field pattern is likely to be historic. Further ecological and historic review will be required.

2.2.5 Potential Landscape and Visual Impacts: The only notable landscape features at the site are the hedges and trees along the boundaries. Development design would dictate the extent to which earthworks would be required to facilitate building works. Residential development at this site will be notable in views from the north-east (Cubbington), from the east (Welsh Road and scattered farmsteads and cottages along that road and, potentially, more distantly from the village of Offchurch). The *Shakespeare’s Avon Way* long distance footpath passes within 300m of the site to the east and views of any development at the site can be expected from this path. There are other designated and informal footpaths in the landscape towards Cubbington. Development here would be prominent in the outlook from some existing dwellings at Lillington, including the flats. It is as yet unclear how or where access to the site would be created and this may have a bearing on local landscape and visual impacts.

2.2.6 What if? If this site was brought forward for development, the following issues would need to be carefully considered:

- Where would access be provided. The most likely positions would appear to be an extension from *The Crest* road and a new route between Eden Court and Southorn Court, or by replacing garages with a road north of Southorn Court. Alternatively it may be possible to create a new road link from the Red House Farm allocation site when that is developed. Both options might be required and both options would have some potential landscape impacts through the necessary loss of boundary vegetation.
- What to do with boundary vegetation around the existing estate and in the existing hedge between this site and the Red House Farm allocation. Both ‘hedges’ are somewhat degraded through lack of management, flytipping and informal use (eg children ‘den’ building). There are some established trees that may have years ahead of them and amenity value. Further detailed survey would be required.
- Sustainable surface water drainage will ideally be integrated into the new development. Given the topography it is likely that this would be required and that the most likely position would be in the north-east corner of the site.
- Design will need to address the relatively prominent setting and the impacts associated with expansion of urban development beyond the established settlement footprint.

2.2.7 Potential development area? Residential development at this site is unlikely to be possible over the entire area due to the steeper topography towards the northern boundary. It is anticipated that development on the steeper ground would be expensive and problematic for access provision. This area might therefore be used to create multi-functional open space, including planting to mitigate views and ecological impacts and space for surface water management provision. Although loss of the

hedge along the southern boundary would be unfortunate, it may not be easy to sustainably retain it within residential development without substantial loss of developable land. If the hedge, which is not in good condition, was removed, it may provide opportunities for better development options in the Red House Farm allocation site and the chance to consider both sites as one. Indicatively this could therefore provide up to 2Ha of additional building land (perhaps space for 50 to 80 dwellings), whilst still allowing the steeper ground at the north of the site for provision of a substantial area of multi-functional open space.

2.3.0 **Landscape Planning Issues:**

2.3.1 **Infrastructure requirements:** As noted, further studies will be required to confirm access, requirements, drainage and other service infrastructure. However it seems likely that development impacts could be retained within the site – excepting that surface water drainage may need to connect to existing drainage ditches to the east. Pedestrian access to the Avon Way footpath already appears to be informally established and might be formalised.

2.3.2 **Cumulative impacts:** The site is adjacent to, and will form an extension of, the Redhouse Farm preferred allocation site. With appropriate design at the Redhouse Farm site it has been anticipated that that development would not be visually prominent from the south (Leamington, Sydenham or Radford Semele) and would be substantially screened by existing vegetation from the north and north-east. The proposed Lillington extension is likely to make proposed development here cumulatively more notable. Depending on the height of new buildings, the development would be likely to be seen as distant settlement, but notable on or near the skyline, especially when viewed from the east and south-east. Any assessment of visual impact must be considered in the context of the existing tall flats at Lillington (Eden Court – 15 floors, Southorn and Ashton Courts, - 9 floors) which are prominent landmarks for several kilometres around Leamington. It is these tall structures that draw the eye and views of which cannot be mitigated. The natural topography and the abrupt transition from the tall buildings to open farmland are also obviously factors in making them prominent. Existing four-storey flats (at Mason Avenue / Burberry Close) are not especially prominent from positions to the east (eg along Welsh Road). This suggests that appropriate height restrictions, careful site planning and appropriate landscape works could greatly mitigate new development and arguably could ‘soften’ the existing urban / rural interface.

2.3.3 There are preferred allocation sites at Cubbington (not likely to be intervisible with this site) and Radford Semele (possibly distantly intervisible with this site). Development of the HS2 rail line would see the line pass some 2km to the east where it could be partially and distantly intervisible with the proposed development site. None of these more distant developments are considered likely to result in significant cumulative visual impacts. A number of other representations have been put forward for development in the locality including land south of the Red House allocation. Further review of cumulative impacts for such development would need to be considered if it was accepted to come forward.

2.3.3 **Potential landscape and visual impacts:** Assuming a sensitively designed scheme with a backdrop to the existing flats, it is envisaged that buildings up to 4-5 storeys might be possible on this site – but it is recommended that a maximum height of 2 storeys is proposed adjacent the interface with open countryside. Preferably the boundary housing would be integrated with private or public green space, significant new landscape structure planting and retention of existing boundary vegetation where possible. As noted – it would be preferable to avoid significant earthworks and to retain steeper parts of the site for green space provision. In this scenario it is envisaged that the magnitude of landscape change could be medium-low. For the identified visual receptors to the east (including those using the long distance footpath) the magnitude of change in views might also be medium to low, with the significance of such changes to views being slight. A further detailed review of landscape and visual impacts would be required as plans develop.

2.4.0 Conclusions:

2.4.1 Although a relatively small site, the proposed Lillington extension would expand settlement into Green Belt on a ridge which is relatively visually prominent, especially for receptors to the east and south-east. However the existing backdrop of tall flats presently makes for an abrupt urban-rural interface and the 2008 JGBS report identified that there might be opportunities to improve this relationship with well-considered design. This site might assist in maximising the potential development area of the existing Red House Farm allocation whilst also allowing for a substantial area of new green space to mitigate landscape and visual impacts.

Opportunities and Assets:

- A predominantly flat area of land at a similar level to existing development to the west and the new allocation site to the south.
- Opportunities to create access from existing roads and between existing buildings. Proximity to existing services at Lillington.
- Attractive outlook and setting to the north, east and south-east.
- Existing trees and hedge boundaries all or some of which might be integrated into design.
- Opportunities to improve and formalise local footpath connections to the countryside.

Constraints and Challenges:

- To minimise adverse landscape and visual impacts – especially for visual receptors to the east. To improve the urban-rural interface and the gradation from the high-rise buildings to low rise dwellings.
- To integrate the existing development at Lillington with the new development, environmentally and socially, and with benefits for both.
- To create multi-functional public open space which can be sustainably managed for the long term.

3. Land at Castle Sixth Form College, Kenilworth

3.1.1 The landscape around the south-east edge of Kenilworth is located within the West Midlands Green Belt and was therefore included in the original JGBS study as areas K6 and K7 – where K6 is the area directly relevant to this school site. The Sixth Form College site was considered part of the existing urban area in that study and is not itself within Green Belt.

JGBS Study Findings – 2008:

Study Area Description	Area K6. An arbitrarily defined area on the southern edge of Kenilworth lying between the A46 at the east end and the historic Rouncil Lane in the west end. A south facing aspect as the topography drops down to <i>Cattle Brook</i> – a tributary of the Avon.
Landscape Character	K6 lies within the <i>Arden</i> landscape character area and <i>Arden Parklands</i> character type.
Visual Issues	Trees and hedgerows provide some visual enclosure. Some longer views possible to the south and Leek Wootton.
Historic and Cultural Issues	No historical data established. Manor of Woodcote bought by Henry Wise, Royal Gardener, in 1709. Bullimore Wood at east end is ancient woodland whilst the field pattern at the western end, near 'Little Woodcote', is indicative of ancient origins. Rail corridor to Leamington. No footpaths shown on OS data.
Ecological Features	Woodland, hedgerow; pasture.
Landscape Condition	Some large scale agriculture. Opportunities for improvement to hedgerows.
Conclusion	The urban boundary includes a school, playing fields and allotment gardens that help form a reasonable transition to the countryside. Residential boundaries seem well established, although there may be some opportunities for minor infill. This area appears to be an important strategic gap between Kenilworth and Leek Wootton. We recommend K6 is retained within the Green Belt.

3.1.2 The site was not included in the WDC 2012 SHLAA.

3.2.0 2012 Review:

3.2.1 General: As noted, the school was considered to be part of the existing urban area in the JGBS, although the reference to potential minor infill along the urban fringe would be relevant to this site. The site is approximately 4.5 hectares in area and therefore might have a capacity for between 100 and 140 new dwellings depending on likely residential densities and infrastructure requirements.

3.2.2 To the north, west and north-east the site is set within 20th century residential development of mainly detached and semi-detached dwellings with good sized gardens. Access to the school is from Rouncil Lane which appears to be a principal distributor route in the locality. To the south-east the site is adjoined by Kenilworth Town Football Club and St John's allotments, whilst to the south the school playing fields are adjoined by agricultural land.

3.2.3 Existing Landscape: Approximately 30% of the site is presently occupied by school buildings, car park and hard play areas, with the remainder of the site managed as playing field. The site is essentially flat at around 88m AOD, but the southern edge of the playing fields fall away to below 85m AOD. School buildings are one, two and three storey – the main structures probably dating from the 1960s. Around the main buildings and the edges of the playing field there are a number of mature trees including ash, lime, chestnut and birch. Although the trees around the school buildings may not be easy to retain in a redevelopment scenario, the trees around the boundary assist local landscape amenity and would ideally be retained. In addition there are mature trees beyond the site boundaries, and a variety of hedge and shrub planting along the boundaries that would need to be considered and protected in future development scenario's.

3.2.6 Ecological / Historical: The site is principally mown sports turf grass with only small areas of shrub border and the few mature trees. It is anticipated the site will therefore generally have limited

ecological value – pending detailed survey. It seems probable that appropriate design could ensure biodiversity enhancement of the site. *Bullimore Wood* is an ancient woodland and the nearest wildlife asset noted locally, approximately 600m to the east. A wooded agricultural landscape adjoins the site to the south. It is unlikely that there are historic landscape assets at the site – pending further review.

3.2.7 Potential Landscape and Visual Impacts: The site will be enclosed by the existing residential setting to the north, west and north-east – where the nearest dwellings are anticipated to define the zone of visual influence. Many of the neighbouring residents may derive some benefit from views to the present playing field, and some properties along the northern boundary may also have longer views to open countryside and Leek Wootton to the south, facilitated by the open playing field. However such benefits might be offset by the taller school buildings, existing boundary vegetation and, presumably, activities at the school – which may sometimes be intrusive for neighbours. Residential development on this site is likely to result in a more enclosed landscape – although with appropriate retention of mature trees and the inclusion of garden areas, it seems likely that an attractive suburban environment could be created.

3.2.8 The site will be visible from open countryside from the south. No public access footpaths have been noted in this area, but the site is distantly visible from public access locations at Leek Wootton (refer to photographs). Assuming that the existing school buildings will all be demolished and that new housing would be a maximum of two storeys tall, it seems likely that new development could be designed to have little impact on the wider landscape setting. Development here will not constitute a notable extension to the existing settlement of Kenilworth when viewed from Leek Wootton or adjacent roads and scattered dwellings along the Cattle Brook valley. More notable detractors in the setting could be said to be *Broad Lane Leisure* (a caravan sales yard located towards Leek Wootton and incongruous in the setting), Kenilworth Town FC (where club buildings are in a state of disrepair and flood lights are likely to be prominent at night), and the St Johns allotments site, (where, as with many allotment gardens, the overall appearance can be described as unkempt).

3.2.8 What if? If this site was brought forward for development, the following issues would need to be carefully considered:

- Mature trees and the best sections of boundary hedge would ideally be safeguarded for the benefit of local amenity and impact mitigation. Negotiation with neighbours might allow the rationalisation of boundary provision in some sections. An arboricultural assessment will identify whether some trees require pruning or replacement to fit within a residential context. Replacement of ash trees may need to be considered in future if *Chalara fraxinea* becomes prevalent.
- Although it is assumed that the school grounds are private, the playing fields may be used informally by neighbours and they certainly provide landscape amenity value. There would appear to be limited public open space in the locality in general and new open space (at least for the benefit of the new residents) would seem to be appropriate.
- Sustainable surface water drainage will ideally be integrated into the new development. It would seem appropriate to locate any attenuation areas towards the southern edge of the site and this could be designed to integrate with public open space and biodiversity enhancement provision.
- Provision of tree and hedge planting along the southern boundary would help to integrate the development into the wider setting adjacent the Green Belt. It is suggested to develop a public open space here to ensure that trees and hedges can be appropriately managed and sustained for the long term and to provide a space where all residents and perhaps neighbours could benefit from the southerly outlook. Tree and hedge planting will ideally be predominantly native.

3.2.9 Potential development areas? Residential development at this site would appear likely to fit well within the existing Kenilworth settlement footprint, with limited landscape impacts beyond the

site. It is assumed that the loss of the school and playing field facilities could be balanced by other facilities elsewhere within the town.

3.3.0 **Landscape Planning Issues:**

3.3.1 **Infrastructure requirements:** Further studies would be required to assess infrastructure requirements – where access may be a critical issue. The present access for the school would appear to be wide enough (approx. 15m) to allow for an adoptable estate road and a dedicated dual use path beside it. It would hopefully also provide space to maintain buffer planting between this access and neighbouring private gardens. If another access was required (eg for emergency planning), it is unclear whether the access along *Gypsy Lane*, (to the east), is appropriate to upgrade. It is narrow and the junction with Rouncil Lane has restricted site lines. Widening this route would have adverse impacts on mature vegetation and neighbouring properties. A second access, if required, might be most appropriate from *Towers Close* (refer to plan). Other infrastructure requirements would need to be reviewed and the associated impacts assessed.

3.3.2 **Cumulative impacts:** Much of the land most likely to be allocated for development around Kenilworth in future is located along the eastern edge of the town and adjacent to the A46 corridor – where the nearest is land at Thickthorn (900m to the east) which will not be intervisible with the school site. Land west of Rouncil Lane (Oaks Farm - 400m to the west) has previously been promoted for development but is not considered likely to proceed due to the likely adverse impacts on Kenilworth Castle and the historic landscape setting here. Land off Warwick Road (approximately 400m south-east of the school site) is presently being promoted for development – including a new site for Kenilworth Rugby Club. Landscape consideration of this representation has been prepared separately. It is unlikely there will be intervisibility between the school site and the land off Warwick Road, but both sites will be visible from some public access locations to the south around Leek Wootton. The development of land off Warwick Road is likely to have a medium-high magnitude of visual change on the landscape setting and a moderate-substantial significance to local visual receptors.

3.3.3 There are a variety of sites put forward for development allocation around Leek Wootton. Many are related to the Police Headquarters site at Woodcote Lane which are unlikely to be intervisible with sites around the southern edge of Kenilworth due to topography and woodland. Site R124 (Black Spinney Fields) at the north edge of Leek Wootton may have intervisibility with Kenilworth and would certainly alter the landscape context in the strategic gap between the two settlements. Cumulative landscape impact assessment must be considered as detail design for all sites comes forward.

3.3.4 **Potential landscape and visual impacts:** Depending on detailed design, the magnitude of landscape change at the school site is expected to be low. There is potential to retain boundary trees and hedges and no apparent need for major earthworks or works beyond the site boundary. With sensitive design, visual impact for immediate neighbours is also likely to be medium-low – with potential to retain longer views over the site and to retain an acceptable ‘suburban’ setting. There would appear to be limited potential for views of the development from the south, and where views are possible they will be relatively distant and the development will not extend beyond the perceived edge of the existing settlement. New residential buildings are likely to be smaller in scale and less prominent than the existing school buildings.

3.4.0 **Conclusions:**

3.4.1 Pending more detailed review of possible site constraints and infrastructural requirements, it seems likely that redevelopment of the Sixth Form College site will not greatly intrude on the rural setting of Kenilworth or undermine the functions of the adjacent Green Belt.

Opportunities and Assets:

- Attractive 'suburban' setting and apparent good access opportunities pending a detailed highways assessment.
- Existing trees and mature boundary vegetation, southerly aspect and views over adjacent countryside.

Constraints and Challenges:

- To minimise visual impacts and achieve an acceptable outlook for neighbouring dwellings.
- Design to create successful interface with open countryside to the south.
- To protect existing and proposed trees in perpetuity.
- Sustain and enhance public open space and ensure good footpath access to minimise local car journeys.