

# Options for Future Urban Expansion in Warwick District Considerations for Sustainable Landscape Planning

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Appendices A, B and C

landscape design • environmental planning



**richardmorrish**associates

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



### **Part 1: Appendix A Possible approaches to development in sensitive locations**

#### **Evaluation of five proposed land parcels in Warwick District**

## 1. Land south of Gallows Hill and the Asps, Warwick

1.1.1 This land parcel is located outside of the West Midlands Green Belt and was therefore included in the Landscape Character Assessment for Land South of Warwick (2009) – (LCASW).

1.1.2 In the WDC SHLAA (2012) the site is identified as potentially suitable for development as W10 (Land south of Gallows Hill), W26 (Gallows Hill / Europa Way), and W27 (The Asps, Europa Way and Banbury Road). Together these areas total nearly 131 Ha. A former landfill site at Turnbull Gardens (see below) is excluded from the study area – but largely enclosed by it.

(LCASW) Study Findings - 2009:

<p><b>Study Area Description</b></p>	<p>This study area is approximately 130 hectares in area and is defined by Heathcote Lane / Gallows Hill to the north, the A452 (Europa Way) to the east, and the A425 Banbury Road to the south and west.</p> <p>The study area comprises agricultural land that is predominantly pastoral in character in the south and large-scale arable in the north.</p> <p>The Tach Brook valley divides the area and flows under the Banbury Road and into Castle Park on the western boundary. Along the northern side of the Tach Brook near Banbury Road is a block of mixed deciduous woodland, whilst on the southern side is a former landfill site (Turnbulls Gardens) occupying approximately 5 Ha. In the south-west section of the site on Banbury Road is 'The Asps' farm, 'The Aspens' and 'The Asps' cottages. There is an old toll-house or gate house at the far north-west corner of the site at the junction of Banbury Road and Heathcote Lane. These dwellings are the only settlement in the study area. There is an electrical sub-station in the south-eastern corner of the site and a pole-mounted overhead cable extends north from here into study area C. One public footpath is noted from OS data (FPW105) at the south end of the study area although it wasn't located on site.</p>
<p><b>Landscape Character</b></p>	<p>The study area is located in the <i>Feldon and Dunsmore</i> character area and the <i>Feldon Parklands</i> landscape type. The rolling topography, woodland and scattered farmsteads are present here and the study area lies immediately adjacent the mature parkland of Castle Park – so that it is considered a good example of the landscape type.</p> <p>Proximity to Castle Park is considered to be an important aspect of the character of this landscape. The 18<sup>th</sup> century woodland planting around Castle Park is a prominent feature of the western side of the site. The woodland at 'Turnbulls Gardens' is connected visually and possibly historically. The topography in the study area extends into Castle Park. It is considered that this study area is an important part of the landscape setting for Castle Park.</p> <p>A ridge at the southern end of the site rises to over 70 metres AOD and reduces the length of views from the A452 and A425. The roads both then drop into the Tach Brook valley before climbing again to the Gallows Hill ridge. Hedgerows with hedge trees are notable on both roads, which generally restrict views into the site. At the north-west corner of the site, the topography drops down opposite Warwick Technology Park and the sports grounds associated with Warwick School. Banbury Road, following the wooded edge of Castle Park, provides an attractive approach to Warwick. More open views towards Warwick and Leamington are possible at the north-east corner of the site at Gallows Hill.</p> <p>In the wider context the study area is in an essentially rural setting, with farmland extending east to Bishop's Tachbrook and south to Barford, whilst Castle Park provides the woodland backdrop in the west. The M40 and A452 link from junction 14 are large carriageways which cut through an otherwise well preserved English lowland landscape. To the north of Heathcote Lane / Gallows Hill, the Technology Park (with its maturing 'woodland' setting) and school sports fields make a reasonably successful transition from rural landscape to town. The land at Heathcote Hill Farm forms study area C above.</p>
<p><b>Visual Issues</b></p>	<p>Development on the higher ground within the study area would make a prominent extension to the existing settlement pattern of Warwick. It is likely that any development would be visible from the A452 or A425 – roads that presently provide a very rural approach to Warwick. It is considered unlikely that any major development could be undertaken in this study area that would not have a major implication on the perception of the setting of the towns or Castle Park.</p> <p>The landfill site at Tach Brook, although being an anomalous and detracting feature</p>

	in this landscape, is presently quite well screened – the most obvious features being the large entrance located on the A425 and some incongruous Leylandii screen planting. The overhead wires are notable at the north-east corner of the site.
<b>Historic and Cultural Issues</b>	The Asps (or Naspes) is referred to as a hamlet from the 14 <sup>th</sup> century. The Tach Brook is also referred to regularly and there was a mill on the brook in Castle Park until the 18 <sup>th</sup> century, when the streamcourse was dammed to create 'New Waters' (ref <a href="http://www.british-history.ac.uk">www.british-history.ac.uk</a> ). The origin of the name 'Turnbolls Gardens' is not established but it may be related to the 18 <sup>th</sup> century development of the Castle Park landscape. There appear to be ponds on Tach Brook toward the east side of the study area, which may be former fish ponds.
<b>Ecological Features</b>	Tach Brook is an important watercourse as it feeds New Waters in Castle Park which is a well regarded wetland habitat that is known to support otters. There are additional ponds on the Brook (noted above). Note on the site plan provided in this appendix that all these areas are identified as potential SINCS sites. There appears to be at least one field pond and another pond at the Asps. The mixed deciduous woodland beside the Tach Brook, extensive hedgerow and hedgerow trees and large areas of permanent pasture will also add to the ecological value of this area. Fox, Deer slots (possibly Roe) and Buzzard noted during the site visit.
<b>Landscape Condition</b>	Large areas of well managed farmland with some relatively good sections of hedge. The perception is of a relatively well-preserved English lowland landscape although hedges may have been lost in the northern section of the site. The landfill site is an anomalous feature in this setting.
<b>Planning Issues</b>	The Tach Brook corridor (and a subsidiary area south of the landfill site at Turnbolls Gardens) are designated as flood risk areas. The entire site is within the <i>Rap 1–Rap 16</i> Rural Policies area. A parish boundary follows Tach Brook. The northern part of the site is in Warwick and the southern part is in Bishop's Tachbrook. It is noted that there has recently been an application to create a caravan park on the landfill site at Turnbull Gardens. The application was withdrawn – but it is expected that it will be resubmitted when additional ecological information becomes available. The southern end of the site was within an area of search for a Park and Ride site for Warwick and Leamington Spa. It is understood that progress on this scheme has been halted by Warwickshire County Council due to financial implications and potential economic impacts to Warwick and Leamington town centres.
<b>Conclusion</b>	This study area is principally well preserved farmland that creates an attractive rural setting for the south side of Warwick and should be considered an important part of the setting for Castle Park. Any development that 'jumped' the Heathcote Lane / Gallows Hill frontage would set a major landscape precedent in extending the urban area so far south. Although it is considered that the Warwick Technology Park has possibly diminished the value of the Area of Restraint north of Heathcote Lane, its general style of low density development in a strong landscape setting makes for a reasonably successful transitional environment on the urban fringe – as do the adjacent school sports fields. To extend the urban area beyond these sites would make for a disjointed urban structure and possibly encourage intensified development at the Technology Park and around the schools. Smaller blocks of isolated development are also likely to be incongruous in this landscape. Our conclusion is that this study area should not be considered for an urban extension and that the rural character should be safeguarded from development.

### 1.2.0 **2012 Review:**

1.2.1 **General.** The general landscape and planning context as described above has not altered since 2009. However, it now seems probable that land to the north adjacent Europa Way (referred to in the LCASW 2009 study as the *Europa Triangle*) will be brought forward for future urban expansion. Proposals have been developed on behalf of a consortium of landowners and Warwickshire County Council. The County evidently own Heathcote Hill Farm – a very open area of arable land at the corner of Gallows Hill and Europa Way. A *Draft Framework Masterplan* prepared by Entec (now AMEC) consultants in May 2010 shows a mixed use development with residential development at Heathcote Farm and employment sector land along Europa Way. The scheme includes a substantial landscape buffer along the Gallows Hill road frontage.

1.2.2 A new road junction has been created at the A425 / Gallows Hill junction. The design and components such as tall street lighting have pushed urban characteristics further into a rural setting. Street lighting is present along the entire section of Heathcote Lane / Gallows Hill and at all the approaches to the prominent Europa Way roundabout, which accentuates the urban character at this urban/rural interface at night.

1.2.3 The former landfill site now has a brown sign ‘Brookside Willows Caravan Park’ but is not open. Reference to the WDC website suggests that planning application W09/0909/AP is still in negotiation. A landscape plan proposes extensive screen planting with a native theme. The site is presently a discordant feature in the local landscape, partly because of previous screen planting works that have introduced formal arrangements of non-native cypress and poplar to the rural landscape. It is not clear whether these are to be replaced in the longer term, but it would be beneficial for local landscape character. Site clearance works near the front of the site have not respected existing trees, which may not bode well for implementation of the rest of the scheme.

1.2.4 **What if?** WDC have asked what the implications would be if the land south of Gallows Hill was brought forward for development in future. As identified in 2009, this land is considered important for the setting of Warwick and Leamington and the historic Castle Park. It generally represents a tract of unspoilt agricultural landscape in good condition. The setting of Warwick School and the Technology Park provide a reasonably successful transition from urban to rural landscapes and the proposed *Europa Triangle* development outlined above is seeking to achieve the same with landscape design.

1.2.5 If urban expansion was proposed south of Gallows Hill, what key considerations would assist in retaining the important landscape functions noted? We suggest the following:

- i. Preserve the overriding sense of a rural setting for principal visual receptors. These can be listed as residents of existing dwellings within and adjacent the land parcel, road users entering Warwick, footpath users on path FPW105, staff at the adjacent business areas.
- ii. The setting of Castle Park must retain some continuity with open countryside. If any built development was proposed in the remaining area of countryside east of the park (the study site), it must be set back and integrated with appropriate landscape infrastructure.
- iii. The hydrological and ecological functions of Tach Brook must be protected so as to sustain *New Waters*, the River Avon and associated assets and values.
- iv. Where possible, impacts on the wider landscape setting must be minimised – e.g. effects on views from more distant visual receptors, effects on the spatial character and pattern of the rural landscape, and adverse effects on notable landscape features.
- v. Discount any development that cannot be achieved within strict sustainability criteria and without the need for large scale infrastructure such as major new roads or major land modelling.

1.2.6 **Potential development areas?** Notwithstanding that there is a long-term plan to consider a park-and-ride scheme at the southern end of the study site (as identified in the Local Plan 1996 – 2011), in general we still feel that SHLAA area W27 – *The Asps, Europa Way and Banbury Road* is unsuitable for urban expansion. The topography of the southern portion of the site would make any development here very prominent in views from the south, including Bishop’s Tachbrook, the M40 and routes into Warwick. From the footpath FPW105, the highest viewpoints provide views over Warwick and as far as Coventry. Development here would extend the settlement boundary up to 1 mile south – a considerable extension into open countryside. It would sever the last large link between Castle Park and its historic rural context. Topography is likely to constrain construction and require groundworks that are then likely to impact on trees, hedges and other landscape features.

1.2.7 The central section of the land parcel, which includes the northern portion of SHLAA W27, and the southern edge of W26, and the area of former landfill at Turnbull Gardens, forms the Tach Brook Valley. A secondary small stream feeds into it from Lower Heathcote Farm to the north east.

Again we feel that this area is unsuitable for development owing to the constraints provided by the streams, the related riverine habitats, established woodland and the landfill site. If consent is given to the caravan site proposed on the landfill area, it will be essential that landscape mitigation works are fully implemented, that they complement the overall landscape pattern, and that they are sustainably managed in future.

1.2.8 The remaining area of the land parcel is located on the higher, principally flat ground in SHLAA area *W26 Gallows Hill/Europa Way* and *W10, Land South of Gallows Hill*, which slopes gently down towards the A425 and the grounds of Warwick School. It is anticipated that there might be a developable land area here of around 30 Ha. Development here would ‘jump’ the present settlement boundary and extend the urban landscape into agricultural land – but it could be largely contained within the existing landscape pattern. With adequate landscape infrastructure it is considered that the principal landscape planning considerations identified above (maintaining a rural setting for principal visual receptors, avoiding adverse impacts on Castle Park, protecting Tach Brook and minimising wider landscape impacts) could be achievable. The generally flat landscape, relationship with existing roads and close proximity to existing or proposed development and infrastructure are likely to make for straightforward construction and compliance with other sustainability agenda - pending detailed studies. (Refer to Figure A1)

### 1.3.0 **Landscape Planning Issues:**

1.3.1 **Infrastructure requirements:** As noted above, the northern portion of this land parcel would appear to have good access potential for vehicular and non-vehicular traffic. The existing overhead cables would need to be addressed, and the Entec<sup>1</sup> report indicates water mains along the edge of the site. The landscape is relatively flat – reducing the likelihood of a need for significant ground modelling. There would be opportunities for sustainable urban drainage relating to the Tachbrook valley. There would be potential to utilise a southerly aspect for solar gain. Further infrastructure planning studies would be required.

1.3.2 **Cumulative impacts:** As noted, areas to the north are proposed for development and this is considered likely to proceed. The nearby SHLAA sites W20 (Warwick Gates, 10 Ha) and W07 (Land south of Harbury Lane, 123 Ha – see below) are being considered for residential development, although W20 was originally proposed for employment land. L14 (Land at Woodside Farm, 11 Ha), 2km to the east, is considered likely to be brought forward for development and is likely to be partially intervisible with the study site due to the prominent topography at L14. There are a variety of land parcels available for development around Bishop’s Tachbrook. These include R52 at New House Farm, and R12, R14, R17–20 and R22 around the village of Tachbrook. All could conceivably be intervisible with the land at Gallows Hill.

1.3.3 It is clear that if all or some of these sites under consideration came forward for development together, then they would be likely to have cumulative visual impacts on the landscape. A wider landscape planning strategy, possibly extending beyond the immediate boundaries of each site, might be able to address some potential environmental impacts. (This issue is considered in more detail in Part II of this study.)

### 1.3.4 **Potential Landscape and Visual Impacts:**

Any development in the indicated area (Figure A1) is likely to be visible from the A425 for approximately 600m north of the wood at Turnbull Gardens, from the Heathcote Lane/Gallows Hill road for approximately 1200m, and from Europa Way for perhaps 400m – although this road includes a narrow woodland screen belt and some sections of bank / cutting. Development would be

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<sup>1</sup> Entec, *Land off Europa Way – Baseline Reports*, November 2010

intervisible with buildings at the existing Technology Park (notably the road front buildings of Alliance Medical and McKesson), and possibly with sports grounds at Warwick School. The toll house cottage in the north western corner of the site is partially enclosed with mature vegetation and recent mitigation works for the widened road junction.

1.3.5 The mature shelterbelts of Castle Park to the west and the maturing and mature tree cover around Warwick School and the Technology Park to the north are likely to define the viewsheds for development south of Gallows Hill (depending on the eventual height of buildings). Similarly the woods at Turnbull Gardens to the south would achieve a comparable function. It is preliminarily estimated by comparison with existing buildings and landscape features, that buildings of up 10–12 metres might be contained within these viewsheds.

1.3.6 Development proposed at the east end of the site would be directly opposite the ‘Land off Europa Way site’ and both sites occupy the flattish plateau hill area at around 65m AOD. No details have been found for the proposed building south of Gallows Hill – but a typical two-storey dwelling might be 8.5m to roof ridge. The proposed employment sector buildings in this development are anticipated to be Class B1 office buildings of a similar height. A landscape buffer is proposed. It is likely that this development will eventually define the northern viewshed for the land south of Gallows Hill – preventing any intervisibility with Myton and other positions north and north east. The Heathcote Industrial Estate, which includes some substantial buildings of more than 10 metres height on land above 65m AOD will define the viewshed to the north-east.

1.3.7 The principal direction of visibility for development south of Gallows Hill is therefore anticipated to be from the south-east – from the adjacent land south of Harbury Lane and from Bishop’s Tachbrook. It is suggested that this could be largely mitigated with a substantial wedge of green infrastructure in the south-east corner of the study site. This would coincidentally occupy sloping land that would be problematic to build on without substantial groundmodelling. ‘Operational’ impacts such as night lighting would need very careful consideration at the design stage, not withstanding that existing road lighting is already prominent on Gallows Hill.

#### **1.4.0 Conclusions:**

1.4.1 Following the review of this land parcel first looked at in 2009, we still conclude that much of the area should be protected from development. However, the flat, relatively well enclosed arable land at the northern end of the site offers a site of approximately 30 Ha that could have sustainable development potential. Additional land release for B1 type development would have synergy with the neighbouring Technology Park.

#### **Opportunities and Assets:**

- Substantially a flat arable site with few landscape features and easy development access.
- A degree of existing enclosure provided by established and developing woodland and roadside trees and hedges. Existing and proposed development to the north does, or will, largely enclose appropriately designed buildings south of Gallows Hill.
- Few local static visual receptors need to be considered. There are opportunities to screen the site from much of the road frontage.
- Opportunities to sustain / enhance rural character and landscape features on the approach roads to Warwick and Leamington.
- The large woodland shelterbelts of the local landscape type offer an opportunity/precedent for new woodland planting that could enclose development and sustain local landscape character.
- Woodland planting would offer ecological corridors for local wildlife (especially north/south).

#### **Constraints and Challenges:**

- To achieve successful integration with existing and proposed development – including possible infrastructural requirements that have not as yet been analysed / defined.
- To ensure any potential visual impacts from receptors in the south-east (Bishop’s Tachbrook) are successfully addressed.
- To successfully address cumulative visual impacts if sites to the east are also developed.



View east from public footpath at 'The Asps', south of Warwick. At 70m AOD any development on this land would be prominent and there is intervisibility with Bishop's Tachbrook and land far to the south-east.



View looking north-east from near the same position - towards development at Heathcote. Note the yellow rapeseed field near Gallows Hill slopes towards the south-east and development here is likely to be prominent from the Bishop's Tachbrook direction.



View east over arable land immediately south of Gallows Hill and opposite Warwick Technology Park. Note woodland at Turnbull Gardens to the right. Development here might be possible to enclose and integrate within a network of green infrastructure with few wider landscape impacts. Care would be required to minimise creeping urbanisation into adjacent areas with roads, lights and infrastructure (see inset).

Land at 'The Asps' and south of Gallows Hill

## 2. Land south of Harbury Lane, Warwick

2.1.1 This land parcel is located outside of the West Midlands Green Belt and was therefore included in the Landscape Character Assessment for Land South of Warwick (2009) – (LCASW).

2.1.2 In the SHLAA (2009) the site is proposed for possible development as W03 (former sewage works), L09 (Grove Farm) and W07 (the entire area – with a total area of 123 Ha).

(LCASW) Study Findings – 2009:

<b>Study Area Description</b>	<p>This area of approximately 130 hectares is generally defined by Harbury Lane to the north, the B4087 Bishop's Tachbrook road to the east, the Tach Brook watercourse to the south and south-west and the A452 (Europa Way) to the west.</p> <p>The study area is principally arable farmland with two farmsteads set within the site – Lower Heathcote Farm towards the west site boundary and Grove Farm towards the east. Lower Heathcote Farm has ponds, known as <i>Heathcote Lakes</i> – a trout fishery. On the access lane to the farm there are also agricultural style buildings near Harbury Lane that may be let for secondary business. Centrally located on the northern Harbury Lane boundary is a mobile home estate known as Heathcote Park (approximately 3 Ha in area). South of this is an area of plantation woodland and what is shown on maps as a disused sewage works. There appears to be a house in large grounds – Heathcote Lodge. There are also two 20<sup>th</sup> century agricultural cottages by the access road on Harbury Lane.</p> <p>There is no public access to this area and the assessment has been undertaken from boundaries.</p>
<b>Landscape Character</b>	<p>The study area is located in the <i>Feldon and Dunsmore</i> character area and the Feldon Parklands landscape type. The study area features the broad top of the Gallows Hill-Heathcote ridge (65–70metres AOD) (see Area C description above) and then falls away quite steeply to the Tach Brook. There are some topographical details – such as a small tributary valley at Lower Heathcote Farm, but essentially the study area has a south-facing aspect.</p> <p>There is a small area of Woodland in the valley near the west boundary with Europa Way and fields have trimmed hedges. Otherwise the landscape is largely arable and open in character.</p> <p>In the wider context the study area lies south of a large urban extension of late 1990s housing known as Heathcote or <i>Warwick Gates</i>. The dwellings come close to Harbury Lane making a fairly abrupt urban-rural interface. To the north-west is the Gallagher Business Park, featuring large office premises. Vacant land is designated for future development adjacent Hawkes Farm and up to the Heathcote Industrial Estate. To the west is agricultural land and to the south more agricultural land and the village of Bishop's Tachbrook. This village must have been a small hilltop settlement before considerable modern expansion in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. To the east, beyond the B4087, is the hamlet of Tachbrook Mallory (a collection of large houses in established grounds) and more open countryside.</p>
<b>Visual Issues</b>	<p>The majority of the site is relatively high and development here would be visually prominent in views from the south and south-east (Bishop's Tachbrook, Tachbrook Mallory, Greys Mallory and other isolated dwellings and the B4087) and in views from the west, including distant views from the historic sections of Warwick. There would be some visual impacts for the residential areas to the north / north-west, but these are likely to be restricted to dwellings at the edge of the existing settlement.</p>
<b>Historic and Cultural Issues</b>	<p>No information has been gathered on the farms within the study area. Tachbrook Mallory manor has Norman origins and Bishop's Tachbrook church is 12<sup>th</sup> century. There is a mound indicated in a field east of Lower Heathcote. A similar mound near Bishop's Tachbrook appears to have been the site of a windmill. There are ponds at Lower Heathcote Farm, although whether these are historic or new is not confirmed.</p>
<b>Ecological Features</b>	<p>Tach Brook is a notable watercourse and ecological corridor. Retaining water quality for this important tributary would be an essential requirement of any future development here. Ponds at Lower Heathcote Farm, nearby woodland, plantation near 'Heathcote Park' and hedgerows and hedge trees will all assist to enhance local biodiversity. Generally the farmland looks to be intensively arable and is therefore expected to have a lower ecological value.</p>
<b>Landscape Condition</b>	<p>Generally well maintained farmland, but the large scale arable management is likely to have involved removal of hedges in the past. Some hedges are gappy suggesting</p>

	landscape decline.
<b>Planning Issues</b>	The Tach Brook corridor is a designated flood risk area. The entire site is within the <i>Rap 1–Rap 16</i> Rural Policies area. A parish boundary follows Tach Brook so that the western section of the site is in Warwick and the eastern part of the site is in Bishop's Tachbrook.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Using this area for urban expansion could relate well to existing development. There could be opportunities for new residential or employment land that would complement the existing urban structure. However, the majority of the site is on high ground and would be prominent in some views – particularly from the south and south-east and the village of Bishop's Tachbrook and hamlet of Tachbrook Mallory. It is expected that there would be opportunities to create a landscape buffer along the Tach Brook corridor and that this would help to maintain sufficient distance between the settlements. However, the existing gap between the settlements would be greatly reduced (probably down to 600–700 metres) and the gap might be considered to have become academic in terms of landscape character.

## 2.2.0 **2012 Review:**

2.2.1 **General.** The general landscape and planning context as described above has not altered since 2009. Development of the land adjacent Europa Way (see 1.2.1 above) and other nearby SHLAA sites would influence the landscape setting – refer to *Cumulative impacts* below. The area is contentious as substantial development here will greatly reduce the open countryside between Heathcote and the satellite village of Bishop's Tachbrook. Our 2009 conclusion was that, whilst a remaining corridor of only 600–700 metres of agricultural is unlikely to retain the present character of the valley, there are opportunities to develop landscape infrastructure that could help to create a strong new character and to greatly mitigate the potential impacts of development.

2.2.2 **What if?** WDC have asked what the implications would be if the land south of Harbury Lane was brought forward for development in future. In fact there has been a long time interest in extending settlement into this area – with proposals from the JJ Gallagher group dating back to the 1990s. It is clear that although this section of the Tachbrook valley has landscape qualities, it also has detracting features. The former sewage works has been offered as a redevelopment opportunity, but remains a largely derelict site; the Heathcote Park mobile home estate is a somewhat anomalous feature in this landscape and the intensive agriculture across the valley appears to have resulted in a decline in landscape condition. In 2011, Gallagher Estates presented a masterplan for 'Lower Heathcote' that illustrates how this area might be developed with provision for a landscape buffer along the Tachbrook watercourse<sup>2</sup>. (In July 2012 Gallagher Estates submitted a new document that shifted development emphasis west to create a 95 hectare 'village' based around Lower Heathcote)<sup>3</sup>.

2.2.3 As part of their Local Plan planning process, WDC have been addressing Green Infrastructure in the district, identifying the existing resource and also areas of deficiency. The areas south of Warwick, Leamington & Whitnash have been identified as deficient in 'accessible natural greenspace' (ANGSt<sup>4</sup>). A recent report by LUC<sup>5</sup> has illustrated an idea for a new *Peri-Urban Park* along the Tachbrook valley incorporating an enhanced stream course and new wetland habitats, meadows, woodland and hedge corridors with a comprehensive path access network. Some improvements to local public access and landscape management have already begun near Bishop's Tachbrook<sup>6</sup>.

2.2.4 If urban expansion was proposed south of Harbury Lane, what key considerations would assist in retaining a meaningful landscape buffer between Leamington and Bishop's Tachbrook? To a

<sup>2</sup> Gallagher Estates, AC Lloyd, Terence O'Rourke – *Lower Heathcote Concept Masterplan* (2011)

<sup>3</sup> Gallagher Estates, Pegasus Planning Group – *Lower Heathcote Farm, Warwick, Background Document*. (July 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Accessible natural greenspace standards (ANGSt) have been promoted by Natural England in their *Nature Nearby* report (2010)

<sup>5</sup> LUC, *Warwick District Green Infrastructure Delivery Assessment* (Feb 2012)

<sup>6</sup> New pasture, hedges and permissive paths through a Defra Environmental Stewardship Scheme

great extent the planning considerations have been amply illustrated in the above noted reports. We would reiterate those proposals by stressing the following:

- Emphasis must be placed on preserving and creating functional landscapes beyond the built environment. For example, the goal should not be to construct a path next to an existing stream, but for the path to run through a multifunctional nature reserve that can be sustainably managed in the long term – with ample access for woodland and hedge management, meadow mowing, sloughing out of pools and stream courses, and in all ways planned with appropriate management-led consideration.
- The retention of agricultural land should be based upon identification of viable agricultural units. In this way there is less chance of slow development creep over time, and, if for any reason a phased development stalls part way, a viable and productive landscape still remains.
- Detailed planning, construction and long-term management of green infrastructure, including a sustainable long-term revenue stream, must be agreed at the outset of development and in conjunction with all stakeholders.
- Design of the main Tach Brook corridor must respect the overall landscape character type. Too many small-scale community projects or themed design ideas could create a discordant landscape and complicated management requirements. Nature can provide variety and detail.
- Special attention should be given to wider integration and linkage with existing and proposed paths and social centres – as illustrated in the LUC proposals.
- Initiatives to help establish and sustain ‘community capital’ for new and existing residents, should involve ‘education’ about the green spaces – and perhaps set ground rules for stakeholders about issues such as dog-fouling and flytipping. *Take ownership and responsibility* should be the message.
- WDC should ensure that successful establishment and long-term management of green infrastructure is a condition of development.

**2.2.5 Potential development areas?** The 2011 Gallagher Estates concept masterplan illustrates residential development across the entire W07 area (with a suggested 2,500 homes, a primary school, secondary school and local centre)<sup>7</sup>. Comparison with the SHLAA suggests this density is in excess of 40dph. The plan includes for ‘public open space’, surface attenuation areas and allotments. It notably proposes that an additional recreation space, including pitches, would be included south of the valley bottom, adjacent Brookside Farm. It is assumed that this provision would be necessary to fulfil open space provision requirements, especially in relation to the secondary school. Although playing fields could be designed with landscape features synonymous with the existing landscape, we feel the likelihood is that sustainable modern sports pitches may eventually require, changing rooms, sports lighting, highly manicured lawns and possibly all-weather surfaces. Inevitably this will have a more urban than rural character.

**2.2.6** The LUC plan for a *peri-urban park* does not indicate any development in the W07 area (although white areas in between habitat allocation could presumably be either retained farmland or new urban development). It is important to recognise that the plan indicates open space provision on both sides of the Tachbrook valley. If the entire space became a park landscape, it would cover more than 1 square mile and be similar in size to Castle Park – presently the largest single ‘green infrastructure’ asset in the District according to the same LUC report<sup>8</sup>. It is difficult to imagine how such a facility might be funded without development related levies.

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<sup>7</sup> The 2012 Gallagher/Pegasus Planning proposal for a reduced area of (initial) development may or may not gain support from different stakeholders. It admirably highlights the importance of WDC having a clear and agreed vision for the entire area that will not be deflected by proposals for piecemeal development.

<sup>8</sup> LUC *Warwick District Green Infrastructure Delivery Assessment* (Feb 2012) Fig 1.1 Existing GI Assets. Although Castle Park is defined as a GI asset, it is largely arable farmland and is not open for public access.

2.2.7 For the purposes of this report we have assumed that urban development of the extent illustrated in the Gallagher 2011 concept masterplan may eventually be required. However, to preserve the rural interface with Bishop’s Tachbrook, and to sustain a viable agricultural unit at Brookside Farm (pending detailed analysis), we propose that any sports pitches required should be included within the W07 site boundary. Additionally it would appear that the largest available area of flat ground is adjacent Grove Farm – and flat topography will reduce the need for ground modelling and associated landscape impacts when creating sport pitches. (The area presently proposed would appear to require significant cut and fill as it rises steeply towards the west and Tachbrook Mallory.)

2.2.8 The Gallagher 2011 masterplan does not include a scale – but through comparison with OS data we estimate that the indicated *Tachbrook Valley Linear Park* may be shown at between 75 and 150 metres wide. We feel this could be an adequate width to create the multifunctional space defined by the LUC report and as outlined above (pending further detailed site analysis and design). It is noted that allotment gardens are proposed within this park – whereas with reference to 2.2.4 above, we feel the integrity of the river corridor landscape needs to be retained. Allotment gardens are a good idea, especially if the proposed housing development density is to rise above 40dph, and therefore they should be included in the site somewhere else. We propose the indicative site masterplan illustrated in Figure A2.

### 2.3.0 **Landscape Planning Issues:**

2.3.1 **Infrastructure requirements:** The Gallagher 2011 masterplan preliminarily indicates locations for access, primary circulation and surface water management. Further study would presumably be required to establish other infrastructure requirements (including assessment of cumulative impacts and requirements from other sites in south Leamington). The site would offer good potential for southerly aspects and solar gain. The busy A452, Europa Way is largely in cutting and noise impacts should not require excessive mitigation proposals.

2.3.2 **Cumulative impacts:** A combination of the land adjacent Europa Way (63 Ha) and other SHLAA sites W20 (Warwick Gates, 10 Ha), L14 (Land at Woodside Farm, 11 Ha), and any of the land south of Gallows Hill that might be developed would adjoin and be directly intervisible with the W07 area. In addition, any of the land parcels around Bishop’s Tachbrook would also be intervisible (R52, R12, R14, R17-20, R22) and also land suggested on high ground to the south of Tachbrook – such as R02 and R31. The likelihood of any of these sites coming forward has not been established. (See also Part II of this study.)

2.3.3 **Potential Landscape and Visual Impacts:** It is anticipated that there would be considerable landscape impacts to the existing site including loss of hedges, hedge trees and the historic field pattern. Substantial removal of semi-natural habitat at the former sewage works would be necessary and there would be some impacts to site boundary hedges and vegetation. Groundmodelling and level changes would be required in some sections. However, the Gallagher 2011 masterplan indicates retention of a range of site features including the main drainage pattern and water bodies. Pending detailed survey, it would be desirable to retain the historic farmsteads – although it is recognised that there are a range of more modern, possibly problematic, buildings at these sites. Old farmstead sites have been used to great advantage in some major development schemes e.g. Cambourne, near Cambridge<sup>9</sup>.

2.3.4 The principal visual receptors for this site will be residents at dwellings within and adjacent the site. Within the site are the dwellings at Lower Heathcote Farm, Heathcote Lodge, the mobile homes at Heathcote Park, and Grove Farm. Immediately north of the site is the large Warwick Gates estate, where approximately 50 dwellings face Harbury Lane and will have views to the south –

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<sup>9</sup> Refer to Landscape Institute website for further info <http://www.landscapeinstitute.org/casestudies>

although some of these are opposite Heathcote Park. Other dwellings at Warwick Gates may have some southerly outlook. To the north-east lies Woodside Farm, the W20 SHLAA site and existing dwellings with south facing views on the higher ground at Ashford Road and Landor Road. Dwellings at Tachbrook Mallory and along the B4087 Bishop's Tachbrook road will have some intervisibility with the site depending on orientation and existing vegetation. To the south, dwellings at Brookside Farm, New House Farm, along the northern edge of the village of Bishop's Tachbrook and possibly at Greys Mallory will have varying degrees of intervisibility with the site. There will be intervisibility with the site for less sensitive receptors at the Gallagher Business Park and the Heathcote Industrial estate. Transient visual receptors on Harbury Lane, Europa Way and the B4087 will have some views of the site, although in the latter two cases these will be relatively short glimpses. To the south the walkers on footpath FPW105 and associated permissive paths near Bishop's Tachbrook will have views of the site.

2.3.5 It would be entirely possible that with good landscape design along the Tachbrook valley, views of the development from the south could be substantially screened within a 20–30 year period. The valley bottom is at around 55m AOD, whilst the highest parts of the site are at 70m, with the majority at around 65m. Suitably selected trees might attain 15 to 20 metres in height after 30 years and have a considerable screening capability that would help to integrate new development. The LUC plan has proposed new habitat creation to the south of Tach Brook. Even whilst retaining viable agricultural units, it may be possible to create a narrow landscape buffer to the south of the watercourse. Hedges and tree planting nearer Bishop's Tachbrook could also define/filter views to the north. The general character and pattern of the wider landscape would need to be complemented.

2.3.6 Building density, scale, height, style and quality would greatly influence the magnitude of visual impact and future perceptions of the development. Post-war development in south Leamington and around Bishop's Tachbrook is largely generic with little distinctive character. Orientation, spatial relationships, and the roof-scape design need to be carefully considered on this south-facing valley side. The 'green fingers' of open space proposed in the Gallagher 2011 masterplan are a good idea and could offer strong spatial character. They will ideally be large enough to allow large native trees to grow to maturity within them.

2.3.7 As at Gallows Hill, 'operational' impacts such as night lighting would need very careful consideration at the design stage.

#### **2.4.0 Conclusions:**

2.4.1 If this contentious site was brought forward for development, the concerns regarding settlement cohesion and cumulative impacts could only be addressed with a generous and wholehearted approach to providing landscape infrastructure. We believe it could be made to work with benefits for existing and future residents – but the standard of development must greatly surpass what has gone before in the locality.

#### **Opportunities and Assets:**

- Opportunity to regenerate former sewage farm and integrate Heathcote Park.
- Existing planning studies illustrate many positive opportunities – including addressing a deficiency in existing green infrastructure.
- Roads and natural drainage appear to offer infrastructural advantages.
- Good landscape assets could be integrated to create distinctive design.
- Southerly aspect, attractive outlook.

#### **Constraints and Challenges:**

- To achieve successful integration with existing and proposed development – including infrastructural requirements that have not as yet been analysed / defined – e.g. roads / lighting.
- To secure the resources to create and maintain excellent green infrastructure.

- To ensure the final scheme delivers the agreed initial vision – especially if phased over a number of years.
- To successfully address cumulative visual impacts if sites to the west and east are also developed.



Large scale development south of Warwick Gates will create a substantial urban extension into open countryside - but with appropriate green infrastructure along the Tachbrook valley and retention of viable agricultural land parcels, there are opportunities to enclose and mitigate such development.

Bishops's Tachbrook to Heathcote and Warwick Gates.

### 3. Land at Blackdown, Warwick

3.1.1 This land parcel is located within the West Midlands Green Belt and was therefore included in the original JGBS study as part of the study areas WL 6b and WL7.

3.1.2 This site has been included in the updated 2012 SHLAA study as site L48.

JGBS Study Findings – 2008 (collated):

<b>Study Area Description</b>	WL6a and 6b lie north of Leamington and are defined by the rail line to Kenilworth to the west, and Sandy Lane to the east, the urban edge to the south and the river Avon to the north. 6a and 6b are split by Kenilworth Road (A452). WL7 is an area known as Blackdown Hill and West Hill to the north of Leamington, bounded by Sandy Lane to the west, the A4113, Stoneleigh Road to the northwest, West Hill road to the north east and the A445 Leicester Lane (the urban edge) to the south.
<b>Landscape Character</b>	The area lies within the <i>Arden</i> character area and the <i>Arden Parklands</i> character type. The area is principally arable agriculture, but there are some substantial (former?) residential premises – most notably West Hill house and a variety of urban fringe landuses.
<b>Visual Issues</b>	The principal route through the area is Sandy Lane and from this road there is a fair level of enclosure from hedges and hedge trees. It is easy to miss that the Avon valley lies just over a crest (to the north west). The existing urban edge seems well defined. Visually diverse due to local topography, trees and hedges. The housing along Leicester Lane is quite visibly prominent and creates a strong edge to Leamington.
<b>Historic and Cultural Issues</b>	No historical information gathered. Some declining estate parkland noted. The manor of Blackdown is understood to have been held by the eminent royal gardener Henry Wise in the early eighteenth century. One footpath – to West Hill house.
<b>Ecological Features</b>	River valley, hedges, hedge trees, some pasture.
<b>Landscape Condition</b>	Reasonably good. Some urban fringe degradation. A 'disc golf' course (Sandy Lane) may be on the remains of an area of parkland. Some 'horsiculture'. Arable agriculture quite intensive. Some new hedge and tree planting would benefit landscape character.
<b>Planning Issues</b>	-
<b>Conclusion</b>	Our view is that the existing road system strongly defines the existing settlement pattern and urban expansion into this area would be difficult to justify. We recommend WL7 is wholly retained within the Green Belt. In 6a / 6b the transition from urban to rural is reasonably successful – with schools, playing fields and allotment gardens helping to create a successful transition to arable based agriculture. At Blackdown, adjacent Kenilworth Road, there is the Nuffield Hospital, 'Woodland Grange' conference centre and other large commercial premises – and there could be opportunities for additional development of this kind. We recommend that this area is considered for further detailed study, but that the majority of it is retained within the Green Belt. Public access routes might be improved.

#### 3.2.0 2012 Review:

3.2.1 **General.** The JGBS description was broad and covered a larger area than the present study site. However, the general landscape description is still relevant. The study area now being reviewed is at the north east boundary of Leamington and is around 66 Ha in area. The largest portion is defined by four roads – Sandy Lane to the south-west, West Hill Road to the north-east, the B4113 Stoneleigh Road to the north-west and the A445 Leicester Lane to the south-east. Two additional large arable fields are included in the land parcel on the west side of Sandy Lane.

3.2.2 To the south-east is the late 20<sup>th</sup> residential area of Lillington and further east Cubbington, whilst to the east and north east lies open arable farmland. As the 2008 study noted, the area to the north-west and west around Blackdown and adjacent the Avon valley has urban fringe landuse with

offices, health facilities and sports grounds, set within a backdrop that still retains a strong rural character. The large North Leamington School is a landmark campus to the south-west of the site.

3.2.3 Existing Landscape: The area is essentially a shallow valley draining west to the River Avon, with a small stream appearing from a culvert under Leicester Lane and passing under Sandy Lane. The western edge of the site and Westhill Road follows a ridge at around 80m AOD that affords long views north-east towards Coventry. *West Hill* house appears to be a large Victorian country house and also on Westhill Road is a second large detached house (*Copper Beeches*). To the north-west, the site boundary lies adjacent to a number of large residential properties on Stoneleigh Road – the biggest of which, *Blackdown Hall*, is now apartments. A range of mature trees stand in these grounds including wellingtonia, cedar and pines and are prominent on the skyline in this direction and all of these properties appear to have large, mature gardens.

3.2.4 The landscape is predominantly arable – consisting of only 10 large arable fields and a small pony paddock adjacent Leicester Lane. OS plans indicate that the fields have been amalgamated with loss of hedges in the last decade – notably in the eastern corner of the site. However, there are mature hedges with hedge trees including oak, beech, willow and ash along most of the remaining field boundaries, and this combined with the enclosing nature of the topography creates a secluded and tranquil rural character through the centre of the site. Wide grass headlands presumably relate to a farm stewardship management scheme. A footpath crosses the site diagonally from West Hill house to Leicester Lane and there appear to be other permissive routes used around field headlands.

3.2.5 The landscape of the study area could be divided into three or four distinct spatial parcels. The wide but shallow valley either side of Sandy lane; the paddock and fields fronting Leicester Lane and overlooked by the adjacent residential area; and, the fields west of *West Hill* house – where arguably the high, flat corner opposite the Stoneleigh Road/ Westhill Road roundabout (shown on some maps as *Bericote Knoll*) could be considered spatially separate again.

3.2.6 Ecological / Historical: Although the arable land itself is expected to have limited ecological value, the headlands, hedges, mature trees and stream, as well as the small paddock and surrounding large gardens can be expected to support a wide biodiversity. Historically the landscape shows many signs that it was a desirable Victorian community on the edge of Leamington, where large houses and small farm estates were developed. HLC records indicate probable 18<sup>th</sup> century planned enclosure in the northern part of the site. WDC GIS data notes ridge and furrow, but this was not identified on site. A small former quarry is noted on the OS plan, west of West Hill house.

3.2.7 Potential Landscape and Visual Impacts: In the 2008 study it was considered that the strongly defined edge to the existing settlement along Leicester Lane was worth retaining. This was principally due to the fairly intact agricultural landscape within the present study area and the anticipated difficulty of mitigating landscape and visual impacts for development here.

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

- Surface water drainage would need to be carefully designed to ensure the existing stream could be adequately protected and hopefully enhanced. Riparian environments can be sensitive to disturbance, but they can also be the focus of beneficial and attractive green corridors. Flood risk management would need to be carefully considered.
- Mature trees and the best sections of hedge would also be important landscape elements to safeguard so as to retain spatial character, scale and ecological value.
- In spite of its use as an urban access road, Sandy Lane has retained a rural character, and any new access plans, including construction of roadside footpaths, would ideally avoid adverse impact to the roadside trees and hedges. This may constrain access options. (Existing road infrastructure may in any case be the principal constraint for this site – pending further study.)

- West Hill is a high point for land north of Leamington. The house and trees make an attractive focal point in local views that would be important to consider in master planning.

3.2.9 **Potential development areas?** If the decision to bring this site forward for development was taken, and appropriate consideration was given to the issues outlined above, there is perhaps no reason not to expand development into the entire land parcel. It is relatively well defined by existing topography, roads and development and would be largely enclosed from the wider landscape setting. (Refer to Figure A3).

### 3.3.0 **Landscape Planning Issues:**

3.3.1 **Infrastructure requirements:** Further studies would be required as details of any development came forward. As noted, access, adjoining roads and surface water management will be critical issues. However, with well considered landscape infrastructure, issues such as visual impacts, non-vehicular access networks, recreational space and ecological provision could all be addressed. However, such provision will undoubtedly lead to a considerable change in landscape character.

3.3.2 **Cumulative impacts:** There are substantial SHLAA sites identified at Cubbington (L19 – any development proposals unknown) and north of Milverton (L07) between the A452 and Coventry railway line (mixed use development). If either of these sites were fully developed in future, they are likely to be partially intervisible with either end of the Blackdown study area and are likely to significantly increase the population of north Leamington. This is likely to have cumulative impacts on roads with likelihood of a need for junction improvements, footpath provision and perhaps other access requirements. Other infrastructure requirements will need to be assessed. The former school site accessed from Cloister Way and Park Road (SHLAA sites L41 and L42) is understood to be set for housing and a care home development and could be partially intervisible with the study site. (Cumulative issues for North Leamington are considered in more detail in Part II of this study.)

3.3.3 There is some chance of intervisibility with the proposed HS2 rail corridor to the east. This is unlikely to cause significant impacts to the development at Blackdown, but from the West Hill area there might be some potential to see elements of the rail development – e.g. a bridge for the A445. Screen planting as proposed would enclose development at the study site from the east.

3.3.4 **Potential landscape and visual impacts:** The principal visual impacts are likely to be for the residents of the dwellings lying south-east of the site. As many of these dwellings are slightly elevated above the study site, it might be possible to design to avoid blocking their views north, but there would inevitably be a significant change in the rural outlook. Dense boundary planting might exacerbate the problem, so a varied boundary treatment might be the most acceptable design approach – perhaps with a retained hedge and groups of trees. Stronger structural planting along the West Hill Rd frontage would enclose development on this higher land – screening it from longer views to the north, retaining a rural approach to Leamington, and sheltering the new development.

3.3.5 Although the northernmost corner of the site, opposite the Kenilworth / West Hill Rd roundabout, is ostensibly in a rural setting, it is a busy intersection, with lit sections of road and further to the south west, linear residential development. New development at this corner might be quite acceptable, especially if integrated with screen planting along the north and north-west boundaries.

3.3.6 Development west of Sandy Lane would adjoin school playing fields and one large residence, *Lakeside Lawns*. It is not clear what the long-term plan for the former school playing fields will be on land south-west of the study site. Sports flood lighting at North Leamington School might have visual impact implications for any future residential neighbours.

3.3.7 The topography of the site will provide some special challenges for development and it is essential that these issues are addressed sensitively so as to avoid impacts to existing landscape features and to sustain the character and spatial distinctiveness of the site.

#### 3.4.0 **Conclusions:**

3.4.1 Pending more detailed review of possible site constraints and infrastructural requirements, it is possible that appropriately designed mixed use development at Blackdown could be largely visually contained within the land parcel boundaries. There is great scope to create a distinctive development and to include assets that could benefit the existing community.

#### Opportunities and Assets:

- Some excellent landscape assets including a stream course, mature trees, hedges, and topographical variety.
- Existing spatial definition that could be protected and enhanced to define development.
- Existing footpath(s).
- Mature boundaries (enclosing) many neighbouring properties.

#### Constraints and Challenges:

- To minimise visual impacts and achieve an acceptable outlook for neighbouring dwellings to the south-east.
- To contain development and create an acceptable transition to open countryside on the north-east.
- Protect the rural character of Sandy Lane for the long term.
- Retain or enhance the character of the other road gateways to Leamington.
- Create a successful stream corridor across the site – managing flood risk, ecological values, landscape and amenity.
- Protect the other landscape assets in perpetuity – especially large trees and old hedges.
- Sustain and enhance the footpath network.



Views of Blackdown - looking east from Sandy Lane. Although the stream was dry in April 2012 - the streamcourse with mature trees is an important asset to protect and retain.



Looking north towards Blackdown Hill - with large properties and a variety of mature trees that would ideally be retained if this area was developed.



Looking south-west towards the new Leamington School from Sandy Lane.



Looking north-west from Sandy Lane. The stream corridor could be enhanced.



Careful design will be required to avoid adverse visual impacts along the A445.



Westhill Rd has a rural character and ...



... is on high ground. Sensitive design would be required.

Views around Blackdown and West Hill

#### 4. Loes Farm, Woodloes Farm, Warwick

4.1.1 This land parcel is located within the West Midlands Green Belt and was therefore included in the original JGBS study as part of the study areas WL 5a.

4.1.2 The land has been considered in the updated 2012 SHLAA as W28. Additionally the south east corner is divided by a second SHLAA site – W05, ‘Hintons Nursery’).

JGBS Study Findings – 2008:

<b>Study Area Reference</b>	WL 5a
<b>Study Area Description</b>	WL5a is a small triangle of land adjacent Guy's Cliffe and bounded by the A429 to the east, the A46 to the west and Woodloes Lane to the south.
<b>Landscape Character</b>	The area lies within the <i>Arden</i> character area and the <i>Arden Parklands</i> character type. The Avon valley is the significant landscape feature and there are many mature trees along the river valley and several blocks of woodland.
<b>Visual Issues</b>	Trees, hedges and valley topography create a variety of visual experience but generally there are mid-distant views over an attractive rural landscape. The A46 and A429 are notable but tree planting generally screens them. Some views back to Warwick and Leamington.
<b>Historic and Cultural Issues</b>	No historical information gathered. Guy's Cliff, Guy's Cliff House (ruin), Guy's Cave, Guy's Mill – an historically important chantry estate prior to Dissolution. Some ridge and furrow noted to the west of A429. Good footpath network. This area appears to be a well used section of the Green Belt, with various recreational opportunities.
<b>Ecological Features</b>	The river corridor; woodland; permanent pasture.
<b>Landscape Condition</b>	General condition appears good. Detailed study likely to reveal opportunities for management improvement along the river corridor.
<b>Conclusion / Recommendation</b>	WL5a – the triangle including Guy's Cliff, is divided from the late 20th century Woodloes Park residential estate by Woodloes Lane. This appears to be a successful and definitive boundary and we would recommend retaining it. We recommend that WL5a is retained within the Green Belt. Some piecemeal development maybe possible – not least the restoration of Guy's Cliff House.

#### 4.2.0 2012 Review:

4.2.1 **General.** The JGBS description was broad and covered a larger area than the present study site. However, the general landscape description is still relevant. The present study area is a smaller triangle (of 28.5 Ha), located at the northern edge of Warwick and defined by the A46 dual carriageway to the northwest, the A429 Kenilworth Road to the east, and the Woodloes Park estate to the south. The latter is a late 20<sup>th</sup> century residential area of mainly two-storey detached houses. A former rural lane – Woodloes Lane – separates the estate from the study site and is a designated footpath (part of the *Coventry Way* long distance path). Loes Farm is located in the central section of the site whilst a second adjoining dwelling with outbuildings is situated outside the proposed site boundary but inside the A46. In the south-east corner as well as Hintons Nursery there are four other dwellings with large mature gardens just outside the site boundary.

4.2.2 East of the A429 lies Guys Cliffe house, Warwick School of Riding, Saxon Mill pub/ restaurant and mature grounds with woodland that all relate historically and spatially to the River Avon that runs behind them. West of the A46 is a mixed agricultural landscape with woodland and pasture.

4.2.3 **Existing Landscape:** The study site is largely permanent stock grazed pasture with an attractive open ‘parkland’ character. There is a short north/south ridge (around 70m AOD) at the central southern edge of the site, with the topography running gently down from this high ground to the A46 and A429. A block of woodland north of Loes Farm divides the northernmost paddock from

the rest of the site and also appears to be the lowest part of the site, with a small brook running through the woodland and draining under the A429 towards the Avon. Access to Loes Farm is a track from the A429. The paddock between this track and the woodland appears to be relatively flat and ‘improved’ with no trees. The land south of the track appears to be much older and includes groups of mature oak and lime tree, well preserved ridge-and-furrow and a variety of other topographic detail that may indicate former workings or boundaries.

4.2.4 The boundary with Woodloes Lane is an overgrown hedge with hedge trees including elm, oak, ash, sycamore, holly, blackthorn and hawthorn – but with gaps that allow views into the parkland and, at the highest section, view north and north-east towards Old Milverton and Hill Wootton. The A46 is largely in cutting as it passes the site and there is a reasonable, but not complete, screen of woody vegetation. However, noise from this busy road is notable. Along the A429 boundary there are again sections of mature vegetation providing some site enclosure – but adjacent Woodloes Farm the boundary is quite open. There is a dual use footpath beside this busy road. At the northern end of the site a national grid transmission line passes overhead and there is a cellnet tower near the A46 boundary. Mature shelterbelts with oak, pine, poplar, ash and sycamore enclose the paddock, but the noise of the adjacent roads is especially notable.

4.2.5 Ecological / Historical: The site includes permanent pasture, large mature parkland trees, woodland, mature mixed native hedges and shelterbelts, a stream and according to the OS data, a number of small ponds – not identified in the site visit. Pending further survey the site would appear to have good ecological potential.

4.2.6 The site has been historically connected to Guys Cliffe house – a significant historic site in Warwick with connections to the Earls of Warwick and other notable families. Most of the south eastern section of the site is included as part of the Guys Cliffe registered park and garden. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Greatheed family are known to have extended the estate to include Loes Farm as parkland. However, on the ground today it would appear that some of the best ridge and furrow and parkland trees lie beyond the designated historic garden in the south-west portion of the site. One of the dwellings in the south-east corner of the site is *Guys Lodge* which may indicate another link to Guys Cliffe. Further historic research and evaluation will be required.

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

- The significance of the historic setting and historic features
- The potential landscape and visual impacts to a range of visual receptors including neighbouring dwellings, the adjacent to the A429 (a main gateway to Warwick), footpath users on the Coventry Way, and potentially, the A46 and land towards Old Milverton.
- Noise and other impacts from adjacent roads
- Proximity of overhead cables
- Potential access and other infrastructure constraints

4.2.8 **Potential development areas?** In our view this site has some significant landscape constraints that should define how far any development extends. If it is accepted that part of the registered parkland and areas of ridge and furrow are expendable, then a portion of land of between five and six hectares could be released for development along the eastern side of the site whilst upholding some landscape planning principles. (Refer to Figure A4).

#### 4.3.0 Landscape Planning Issues:

4.3.1 **Infrastructure requirements:** Development on this site might be difficult to access from the A429. Access arrangements here would certainly impact on the site and this important gateway to Warwick. A roundabout or slip road would almost certainly be required as it is a busy road. An

alternative access has been mooted from Primrose Hill on the Woodloes Park estate although this would have to cross Woodloes Lane – with impacts for the Coventry Way footpath. This scenario would pre-suppose development of the higher, visually prominent, parts of the study site and altering a larger area than has been suggested in Figure A4. Any noise attenuation structures and / or earthworks that were deemed necessary adjacent the A429 would need to be carefully designed to complement the local landscape setting, and gateway to Warwick. Surface water drainage might utilise natural topography to the existing stream – with some SUDS facilities. Other infrastructure requirements would require further study as details of any development came forward.

**4.3.2 Cumulative impacts:** This site would adjoin SHLAA site W05 (Hinton’s Nursery) if that was developed and is likely to be intervisible with L07 (Land north of Milverton) if that site also came forward. By restricting development to the eastern side of the site and on lower topography, the likelihood of intervisibility with L07 could be greatly reduced. A well considered development at this site is unlikely to be visible for travellers on the A46, so that the perception of cumulative urban expansion along this road corridor should not be an issue. However, any development adjacent the A429 will certainly become a relatively prominent extension of Warwick for those road users.

**4.3.3 Potential landscape and visual impacts:** There are clearly a variety of potential landscape impacts for development on this site – including historic topographic features, impacts on drainage and on mature vegetation. The indicative scheme could avoid the major topographic variety across this site and the associated ground modelling issues.

**4.3.4 Potential visual impacts** will include changes in outlook for neighbouring dwellings – especially from the dwellings that back onto Woodloes Lane in the Woodloes Park estate, and the four dwellings in the south-east corner of the site. Presently these residents have an attractive rural outlook to the north. As noted there are longer views towards the north-east, suggesting that there will be some intervisibility with positions as far away as Hill Wootton. Development at this site would influence the perception of Warwick at a key gateway into the town. Similarly the outlook from the *Coventry Way* footpath is likely to be greatly altered – which may affect local residents using it for local access and recreation as much as any long distance walkers. The site is likely to be visible from a footpath on Blacklow Hill to the west, although this has not been verified. The indicative plan and careful detailed design could minimise many of these visual impacts.

#### **4.4.0 Conclusions:**

**4.4.1** Pending more detailed review of possible site constraints and infrastructural requirements, the Loes Farm site may offer some potential for future urban expansion. However, the extent of such development will clearly be dependent on the extent to which it can be deemed acceptable to lose historic landscape features.

#### **Opportunities and Assets:**

- Some good landscape assets around the site boundaries could be retained and strengthened to help enclose the site and soften visual impacts.
- If the Primrose Hill access was not used, the ridge, and the rising ground to it, could be preserved as parkland – retaining the best northerly outlook from Woodloes Lane and from the neighbouring housing, whilst helping to protect the new development from A46 noise intrusion.
- Topography could be used to facilitate natural drainage across the site with potential for water related green infrastructure in the lowest north-east corner of the site.
- Loes Farm and the adjacent dwelling could be retained within a largely landscape setting. Some of the existing dwellings in the south-east corner might retain a rural outlook to the north-west.

Constraints and Challenges:

- The most logical area to develop would lie within the registered park / garden area. It would affect some well preserved ridge and furrow pasture. Other historic constraints may be defined in detailed studies.
- Road access requirements would need to be further explored and could introduce cost constraints.
- Careful landscape design will be required in order to retain/provide an acceptable gateway to Warwick and a buffer for new development adjacent the A429.



View looking north-west from Woodloes Lane. Development on this ridge is likely to be intervisible with high ground at Hill Wootton and towards Leek Wootton, as well as influencing perception of the area from the A429, Centenary Way and potentially the A46.



View looking north-east from Woodloes Lane. Note intervisibility with housing to the east and also the 'parkland' setting with mature trees.



View along Woodloes Lane and Woodloes estate to right.

## 5. Red House Farm, Lillington, Leamington.

5.1.1 This land parcel is located within the West Midlands Green Belt and was therefore included in the original JGBS study as part of the larger study areas WL 10.

5.1.2 The land parcel has been identified in the SHLAA (L23 – Land at Red House Farm, Campion Hills) and is approximately 11.5 Ha in area.

JGBS Study Findings - 2008:

<b>Study Area Reference</b>	WL 10
<b>Study Area Description</b>	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.
<b>Landscape Character</b>	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.
<b>Visual Issues</b>	An attractive valley setting – relatively open due to modern agriculture – but you cannot get away from the Lillington backdrop. Visual connections with Offchurch to the south.
<b>Historic and Cultural Issues</b>	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.
<b>Ecological Features</b>	Watercourse, hedges and hedge trees, woodland, permanent pasture.
<b>Landscape Condition</b>	Reasonably good condition in valley – but the boundary of Lillington could be improved.
<b>Conclusion / Recommendation</b>	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.

### 5.2.0 2012 Review:

5.2.1 **General.** The JGBS description was broad and covered a larger area than the present study site, although the general landscape description is still relevant. The current study site is at the edge of Lillington and comprises a large arable field at the eastern end (about half the site area) and three pony grazing paddocks, at the top of a hill / crest. The site generally adjoins existing two-storey semi-detached dwellings on Buckley Road, to the north, arable land to the east, paddocks, woodland and mixed arable to the south and a Severn Trent water treatment works to the west. However, there are four-storey flats adjacent the site at Mason Avenue / Burberry Close, and although not immediately adjoining, the much taller Eden Court and Southern Court flats dominate the backdrop to the north. *Red House Farm* is located 1km south of the study site near Newbold Comyn Park. The concrete access road to the farm crosses the land parcel from Black Lane and is also a public footpath. Another public footpath follows the boundary of the existing settlement. A dwelling with stables at the southern edge of the study site is *Top Cottage* but is known as *Red House Farm Riding School*.

5.2.2 **Existing Landscape:** The paddocks and part of the arable land are reasonably flat – forming a plateau top to the hill at around 95m AOD. However, the arable field falls away sharply in the south-east corner of the land parcel to 75m AOD. There is a distinctive topographic ‘gully’ in this corner.

5.2.3 The transition from the Lillington residential estate to countryside is abrupt. The boundary is delineated by overgrown hedges with some mature hedge trees – which provide some enclosure – but there are opportunities for attractive long views out to the south and east. In spite of the proximity to Lillington, the setting feels relatively tranquil and rural – although air traffic was notable during the visit. During the visit the site felt quite exposed, especially away from the shelter of boundary hedges. A pole mounted service runs east-west across part of the site.

5.2.4 Boundary hedges at the east end of the site appear old and well established and include ash, blackthorn, hawthorn, field maple, holly, elder, bramble and field rose. There are three large oak trees on the boundaries in the south-east site corner. The field hedges that divide the pony paddocks are younger (possibly later enclosure act) and are principally hawthorn and blackthorn. The farm road / footpath is defined by post and rail fence. The hedge boundaries with the housing estate vary in quality and content – including remnant rural hedge mixed with more ornamental species. There is a scrappy urban fringe character to much of the boundary with various types of fencing, evidence of flytipping, litter, informal paths and dog dirt. In the adjacent estate there are some large areas of mown grass amenity space with a variety of ornamental tree planting (cherry, plane, birch, willow) that contribute to the boundary landscape. The hedges at the west and south-west boundaries of the study site (adjacent the Severn Trent site) appear to be older and again include some large hedge trees (oak / ash).

5.2.5 **Ecological / Historical:** The arable land and the improved pasture of the paddocks is anticipated to have limited ecological value. Boundary hedges, especially those at the east and west ends of the site which include a range of mature trees are considered to be the most important ecological features pending detailed survey. There are also banks and ditches associated with these boundaries, but no other water bodies were noted. No other earthworks, ridge and furrow or other signs of historic activity have been noted. Similarly no relevant records have been found in a preliminary review of WDC data.

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

- Integration with the existing estate.
- Access arrangements.
- The potential landscape and visual impacts to a range of visual receptors including more distant observers to the north-east, east and south.
- Topographic constraints in the south-east corner of the site

5.2.7 **Potential development areas?** Although the conclusion from the JGBS study was that development on this high ground would be visually prominent, further review suggests a sensitive approach to development here could be quite well contained. It could also be argued that there is a potential to enhance the existing urban / rural interface. (Refer to Figure A5.)

### 5.3.0 **Landscape Planning Issues:**

5.3.1 **Infrastructure requirements:** Access would appear to be the critical constraint. The SHLAA has identified access as a problem – although there appears to be access from Black Lane and also potential for access from Buckley Road through an amenity space opposite Clare Close. A blue sky approach might seek to consider partial redevelopment of some of the existing housing at Lillington so as to enhance opportunities to fully integrate old and new residential areas. Other infrastructure constraints have not been established. It is assumed that basic utilities could all be

extended from the existing estate. A sensitive approach to accommodating construction without major level changes will enable retention of existing landscape assets. The south facing aspect will offer good opportunities for passive solar design and /or solar collectors.

**5.3.2 Cumulative impacts:** There are other SHLAA sites available at Offchurch (R42, R43, R48), at Cubbington (L20) and at Radford Semele (L21, R44, R45, R46, R67 and others). There is some potential for intervisibility between the study site and these other areas, although the indicative plan proposed coupled with appropriate detailed design of buildings would minimise potential visual impacts. The proposed SHLAA site L38 would substantially fill the greenfield area between Lillington and Cubbington and if combined with this study site would potentially have a much larger cumulative impact – especially in views from the east. This area was recommended for further study in the JGBS, but only the land parcel at Red House Farm has been reviewed again in this present study. Development on the steeper east facing slopes is unlikely to be feasible without substantial landscape and visual impacts.

**5.3.3** Another major development that could be intervisible with the study site is the HS2 rail line – which would pass some 2km to the east. Preliminary review suggests the railway will generally be in cutting in this section, and when it crosses a viaduct over the River Leam it will be behind a ridge east of the Cubbington/Offchurch road (Welsh Road). It is considered unlikely to create significant impacts for residents at Lillington, although if SHLAA site L38 was developed it is likely to be intervisible with some sections of the rail route.

**5.3.4 Potential landscape and visual impacts:** Development on this high ground might not be as prominent as first thought. The crest of the hill, as well as mature vegetation within the Newbold Comyn golf course area is likely to mitigate views of new development here – especially from the Radford Semele and Sydenham directions. There would also be good potential to create a ‘soft edge’ to urban expansion with woodland planting. In some respects the scale of the existing flats at Lillington might themselves be mitigated with the introduction of a more considered and less abrupt transition achieved through smaller scale buildings and appropriate landscape infrastructure.

**5.3.5** The steeper slopes at the south-east corner of the land parcel are more prominent in views from the south and east (especially from Welsh Road, Offchurch and isolated dwellings in the valley e.g. Tanners Farm, White House Farm and Ham Farm). There are also mature trees and hedgelines that help to enclose the site from Cubbington and countryside to the north-east. Although the land is not too steep for arable farming, it is likely to need considerable earthworks and retention to accommodate modern building development. All these factors suggest it would be prudent to protect this corner from building and utilise it as functional green space within a development. As much of the site is likely to drain towards this corner there may also be opportunities for sustainable urban drainage infrastructure here – but it must not undermine the existing oak trees.

**5.3.6** The degraded hedges and planting along the existing residential boundary, as well as the younger hedges dividing the fields, have less landscape value and a case could be made for removing them, especially if replaced by new landscape infrastructure designed to provide more landscape and ecological benefits in the longer term.

#### **5.4.0 Conclusions:**

**5.4.1** Pending more detailed review of possible site constraints and infrastructural requirements, the Red House Farm site appears to offer good potential for future urban expansion.

#### **Opportunities and Assets:**

- Some good landscape assets to retain around the boundaries.
- Generally flat building areas.

- Opportunity to use unique topography of south-east corner for green infrastructure.
- Considered design could enhance urban/rural interface.
- Excellent aspect and outlook for new homes.
- Potential to remove / enhance present ‘urban fringe’ elements and to design to avoid them returning.
- Existing footpaths provide access to countryside and regional recreation facilities.

Constraints and Challenges:

- To achieve successful integration between the existing and proposed built environment.
- Achieve suitable vehicular access.
- Create sustainable urban fringe landscape.
- Avoid detrimental impacts on wider landscape.



View of potential development site at Lillington - looking south-west from near Eden Court. Note existing trees and overgrown hedge that defines the present urban / rural interface.



View looking south-east from the study site. A portion of the site that slopes in this direction will ideally not be developed so as to minimise potential visual impacts in the wider landscape.



View looking west from Welsh Road between Cubbington and Offchurch. This is the direction from which views of urban expansion at Lillington might be most likely. However existing and new tree planting and the inclusion of green space could greatly mitigate such views.

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



### **Part 2: Appendix B Addressing potential cumulative impacts and settlement coalescence in Warwick District**

#### **Evaluation of five study areas as defined by WDC**

### **i. South of Leamington and Warwick, Europa Way, Warwick Gates and Bishop's Tachbrook.**

- 1.1.1 The first study area land parcel is located outside of the West Midlands Green Belt and was therefore included in the Landscape Character Assessment for Land South of Warwick (2009) – (LCASW) as areas C (Europa Way triangle), D (land south of Gallows Hill) E (land south of Harbury Lane) and F (land at Woodside Farm).
- 1.1.2 In the updated SHLAA (2012), the west central section of the site is outlined for development consideration as W10 (Land south of Gallows Hill), W26 (Gallows Hill / Europa Way), and W27 (The Asps, Europa Way and Banbury Road). The north-western section of the site is proposed for development as W08 (Land west of Europa Way) and W29 (Heathcote Farmhouse) and a number of studies and proposals have been put forward for mixed use development on this site – by a consortium of landowners including the County Council. A large area of land is proposed for development south of the Warwick Gates residential area (south of Harbury Lane), including W09 (former sewage works), L09 (Grove Farm) and the entire area is defined as W07 (Lower Heathcote Farm and adjoining land). SHLAA area W20 (Warwick Gates) was formally proposed as employment land but could be considered for housing, whilst detailed representations and masterplans have been developed for housing at L14 (land at Woodside Farm). A variety of land parcels have been put forward for consideration for development around Bishop's Tachbrook. These include R02, 11, 12, 14, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 31, 52 and 65. R52 (land at New House Farm) is relatively large and covers much of the south side of this section of the Tachbrook valley.

#### Existing landscape – summarised from the (LCASW) Study Findings – 2009:

- 1.1.3 Some of the general conclusions in 2009 were:
- Land at the west of the study area defined by Gallows Hill, Europa Way (A452) and the A425 is important for the setting of Warwick, providing an attractive rural approach at important Gateways to the town. It is also important to the setting of the historic Castle Park. The Tachbrook valley section was considered important as an ecological and natural drainage corridor – even though part of it contains a former landfill site. It was concluded that this area should be protected from development.
  - The land at Heathcote Hill Farm extending north to Myton was considered to not contribute greatly to the setting of Warwick and Leamington, partly owing to some sections of somewhat degraded modern agricultural landscape with power lines, and partly due to the proximity of large offices and industrial buildings on adjacent land at Heathcote industrial park and Warwick Technology Park. It was considered that the area might be suitable for well considered mixed use development that safeguarded landscape assets and created new green infrastructure that enhanced approaches to the towns.
  - The land south of Harbury Lane was considered to be reasonably well hidden from approach roads to Warwick and Leamington, but prominent in views from Bishop's Tachbrook and adjacent land and dwellings. It was considered that urban expansion could fit well with the Warwick Gates development and that landscape provision could greatly mitigate any adverse impacts in views from the south. However, development here would be a relatively large urban extension and would greatly reduce the landscape buffer between Leamington and Bishop's Tachbrook.
  - Development of the site at Woodside Farm was considered likely to have some adverse impacts on adjacent residential development but not to greatly alter the setting of Leamington and Warwick. It was suggested that retention of landscape assets and new planting could largely enclose the site and make it a potentially attractive residential environment.

### 1.2.0 **2012 Review:**

#### General

- 1.2.1 Since 2009, few changes have occurred in the study area, but there has been increasing interest in urban expansion into this landscape. A *Draft Framework Masterplan* (May 2010) for W08 and W29 (the ‘Europa triangle’) shows a mixed use development with residential development at Heathcote Farm and employment sector land along Europa Way. In 2011, Gallagher Estates and AC Lloyd presented a masterplan for ‘Lower Heathcote’ (SHLAA site W07) that illustrates how this area might be developed with 2,500 dwellings, new schools and a local centre<sup>1</sup>. There is provision for a landscape buffer / linear open space along the Tachbrook watercourse. A masterplan was developed for land at Woodside Farm in late 2009 with a proposal for between 250 and 350 dwellings.
- 1.2.2 WDC have identified a shortfall of recreational facilities and green infrastructure around south Warwick/Leamington and a *Green Infrastructure Delivery Assessment*<sup>2</sup> report (2012) indicates potential for a substantial ‘peri-urban’ park network in the Tachbrook valley. It seems likely that an initiative of this scale would require funding from development related levies. However, there would be great potential to enhance existing landscape and ecological values in the locality with benefits for existing and future residents.

#### South of Harbury Lane

- 1.2.3 Part 1 of this report considered principles for master planning that could facilitate ‘sensitive’ development on several sites around Warwick and Leamington – including W07 Heathcote Farm / land south of Harbury Lane, and W10, W26 and W27 – land south of Gallows Hill. For the Gallagher led proposals at W07, we have concluded that their draft masterplan has potential to provide sustainable new development and to utilise some brownfield land (sewage works) whilst providing some of the green infrastructure requirements identified by WDC. However, the existing open agricultural landscape between Leamington and Bishop’s Tachbrook would be considerably reduced and carefully designed and managed landscape areas would be essential to mitigate potential landscape and visual impacts. We have also stressed the importance of retaining viable agricultural units – as a working agricultural landscape generally underpins the landscape character in the locality (refer to Part 1 report – Figure A2).

#### South of Gallows Hill

- 1.2.4 For land south of Gallows Hill, we have concluded in the Part 1 study that this remains important to the setting of Warwick and Castle Park, that it is prominent in approaches to the existing settlement and that it should be largely protected from future development. However, we have suggested that there may be potential for the northern section of the area (largely defined by W10 and W26) to be considered for appropriate development – if set within substantial green infrastructure. This would facilitate expansion of the peri-urban park concept for south Warwick, Leamington & Whitnash and sustain the important Tachbrook drainage corridor – utilising it as a natural boundary to the development. The Part 1 report Figure A1 indicates how a plan might be developed that could mitigate against visual impacts for adjacent areas.
- 1.2.5 The current status of a park-and-ride facility that was mooted for development near the A452/A425 roundabout near Greys Mallory has not been established at this time. If this proposal was resuscitated, the landscape and visual impacts will obviously be dependent on

<sup>1</sup> Gallagher Estates in conjunction with Pegasus Planning Group have since submitted a revised development scenario in their *Lower Heathcote Farm, Warwick, Background Document* (July 2012). Refer to Part 1 of this study.

<sup>2</sup> LUC, *Warwick District Green Infrastructure Delivery Assessment* (Feb 2012)

its size and design as well as final position. Access design, drainage accommodation and night lighting are three aspects that could greatly influence the zone of visual influence. A site north of the A425 behind an existing electricity sub-station and police depot could probably be screened from the south and east, but would be prominent in views from a footpath to the north. Land south-east of Park Farm would seem to have potential for a discrete design with appropriate screen planting – but would involve the loss of permanent pasture and an attractive existing outlook from the A425. Potential sites to the south would seem to have constraints including an existing watercourse, a small field pattern with permanent pasture and the potential to be prominent in views from the A452 and possibly the M40. With an appropriate site and good design, it is considered likely that intervisibility with the other potential development sites south of Leamington/Warwick could be avoided – but a park-and-ride scheme clearly has urban characteristics and is likely to give rise to a perception of urban creep in to the countryside.

- 1.2.6 No detailed representations or plans for potential development around Bishop’s Tachbrook have been seen and the potential to expand the village sustainably has not been addressed in detail in this study. Preliminarily it would seem possible to conclude that a large scale development south of the Tachbrook valley (e.g. SHLAA site R52) would have little to commend it – being a green field site prominent in the landscape, separate from other development and likely to have a variety of adverse impacts on existing settlement and the wider landscape setting. Similarly some of the larger land parcels proposed directly adjacent to Bishop’s Tachbrook are situated on higher ground and would be prominent in the local landscape. Whether some of the smaller sites proposed in the SHLAA study have development merit would need further assessment. The village has a primary school, convenience store and other community facilities but is still mainly dependent on local centres in Leamington for services. Some sections of the village already appear to have on-street car parking constraints and the sustainability of further growth would need careful consideration.

#### Other cumulative impacts.

- 1.2.7 SHLAA sites proposed south and east of Whitnash and Sydenham will not be intervisible with this study area. A principle concern for development in this area would be cumulative impacts on roads as most of the existing routes already appear to be busy and the A425, A452 and B4087 are all important routes into Warwick and Leamington from the M40 and the south. There is a dual use footpath along the B4087 between Whitnash and Bishop’s Tachbrook, but the footpath beside the A425 is limited and there is no pedestrian access encouraged beside the southern section of the A452 (Europa Way). Widened junctions on the A425 at Gallows Hill and at the B4087/Harbury Lane junction illustrate the urbanising impact of road expansion, and these and adjacent roads are now fully lit. It will be essential to plan to control traffic proliferation around south Leamington, to avoid the creation of major road barriers and to provide excellent non-vehicular access networks. Night lighting in urban fringe areas should ideally be curbed.

### **1.3.0 Conclusions and Recommendations:**

- 1.3.1 Although the areas south of Warwick and Leamington are not in Green Belt, they are clearly important to the setting and perception of the towns. A great deal of land is being promoted for development and it seems likely that a significant proportion of it will come forward for urban expansion in the near future. All development sites must be considered within the whole context. Our recommendations are:
- Fix a green infrastructure vision for south Leamington and Warwick with agreed goals. This report and the *LUC Delivery Assessment* have identified some key requirements.

- Plans and proposals for individual sites most complement the overall vision. They must provide the resources to achieve the wider plan – within and beyond individual site boundaries.
- Individual development teams must agree to work with all other stakeholders to achieve the wider vision. This might be a condition of consent.
- As detailed designs for individual sites develop – the position, orientation, scale, height, style, and character of buildings and other key features must consider the wider landscape context, intervisibility with other sites and the creation of new recognisable urban and rural structure. Designs need to consider ‘place making’ at a ‘trans-neighbourhood’ level.
- Cumulative on-and-off site infrastructure requirements must be thoroughly assessed before any works proceed. Retro-fitting infrastructure (e.g. bigger roads and junctions) is unlikely to be successful unless provision has been made in the original vision.
- Development will ideally be guided by natural landscape boundaries and features. Green infrastructure should ‘fit’ the wider landscape pattern and character and complement existing resources (e.g. the riverine landscape along the Tachbrook valley). Green infrastructure should be designed as multi-functional environments and with sufficient space / access for long-term sustainable management. Corridors need to facilitate wildlife movement. (Refer also to Part 1 of this study and the specific areas south of Gallows Hill and south of Harbury Lane.)
- Phased development should sustain viable agricultural units on remaining land. Avoid creating areas of ‘land awaiting development’ over economic cycles.
- Pervasive cumulative impacts (e.g. street lighting and overhead cables) must be considered and controlled in the overall vision for the area.
- It would be beneficial to have a common design palette for linking green infrastructure between sites.
- The green infrastructure vision for the area should take account of existing initiatives in the locality – e.g. the Woodland Trust community woodland scheme adjacent Woodside Farm and the Defra farm stewardship initiatives near Bishop’s Tachbrook.
- Design should consider future opportunities for a wider network of paths and access – e.g. links through Castle Park.
- Safe road crossings will be essential in creating an integrated network of paths and spaces. Europa Way is presently a substantial barrier across the Tachbrook Valley – for people and wildlife. Would a short section of bridge / flyover to allow a landscape link under the road be viable? It should be a principal goal of future development to avoid creating new barriers in the landscape like this one.

**ii. Sydenham, Whitnash, Radford Semele.**

- 2.1.1 This study area has originally been partially addressed in the Landscape Character Assessment for Land South of Warwick (2009) – (LCASW) as areas G (east of Sydenham) and H (south of Sydenham). Area J (Fieldgate Lane) lies just to the south-west.
- 2.1.2 There have been proposals for development in this locality for several years. In the updated SHLAA report (2012), the areas L10 and L39 are located adjacent Sydenham and Whitnash whilst R46, R56 and R68 are on land west of Radford Semele. A variety of other potential development sites are identified east and north-east of Radford.

Existing landscape – summarised from the (LCASW) Study Findings – 2009:

- 2.1.3 Some of the general conclusions were:
- The ‘green wedge’ between Sydenham/Whitnash and Radford is important in retaining the identity of the separate communities. Sydenham and Whitnash are distinctly neighbourhoods of the wider Leamington urban area, whilst Radford has presently managed to retain its independent village character (even though on the A425, the Ricardo factory has effectively closed the gap between the two settlements).
  - The farmland between the communities is approximately 500 metres wide. It appears to still retain agricultural viability as arable farmland – and therefore sustains a very rural character. The field pattern with tree and hedge cover provides the visual and spatial qualities to keep the settlements distinct. It is considered that a reduction of this width is likely to undermine arable production, leading to land use changes that would ‘urbanise’ the setting and that these changes would, in turn, lead to perceived coalescence of the settlements.
  - The Whitnash brook is a locally important wildlife corridor, a nature reserve and a managed landscape that adds value to existing residential areas. It is also an important drainage corridor and the lower valley floor is a flood risk area.
  - There are some good footpath links to the wider countryside and these are well used. Mature trees and hedges, the watercourses and riverine habitat, a variety of local wildlife, and the variety of spatial and visual experience, including longer views from higher ground, make the local walks particularly attractive.
  - The landscape to the south of Radford and east of Whitnash is attractive mixed farmland with few detractors. The railway line creates a strong barrier to development expansion from Whitnash and restricts potential access. The higher ground immediately south of Radford helps to enclose the local setting from points further south and east.
  - Active farming and also management of the Whitnash brook environment has generally maintained landscape condition and avoided the type of landscape degradation that often affects urban fringe areas.
  - In 2009, it was noted that development was proceeding at Fremund Way in Sydenham. It was also considered that there might be some opportunity for minor infill development around Radford that would not substantially undermine the gap between the two settlements.
- 2.1.4 The principal landscape feature in this study area is the Whitnash brook and its shallow valley. The topography and the existing settlement either side of the valley generally define the local viewshed, and therefore development in this area might be largely hidden from the wider landscape and approaches to Warwick and Leamington. However, in the immediate local context the presently successful relationship between Sydenham/Whitnash and Radford could be spoilt by insensitive or extensive development.

## 2.2.0 **2012 Review:**

### General:

- 2.2.1 The general review has considered the likely intervisibility of proposed SHLAA sites in and around the study area. The proposed sites to the east of Radford are unlikely to be intervisible with the Whitnash valley (e.g. R29, R41, R67, R03, R44, R45 and sites in Offchurch) – although the cumulative impacts of road traffic and other demands on infrastructure could have an impact on the existing settlements. The proposed HS2 rail corridor (3km to the east) is not anticipated to be intervisible with the valley. SHLAA sites L23 and L38 could be distantly visible on the high ground at Lillington, and if the Fieldgate Lane site was developed south of Whitnash (L11) then this could also be intervisible with the south end of the study site.
- 2.2.2 However, the main areas of development identified in the SHLAA that would influence the character of the Whitnash valley (and specifically the perception of having two separate settlements) would be expansion south and east from Sydenham and Whitnash (SHLAA sites L10 and L39) and expansion west and south from Radford Semele (R46, R21/R56 and R68).

### South and East from Sydenham and Whitnash:

- 2.2.3 Since 2009, the Fremund Way development (noted above) has been completed. The resulting development is rather generic in character, with little consideration to good environmental design and little to suggest that the resulting estate can mature into a more enduring and attractive urban townscape. Although there has been some setback from the Whitnash brook corridor, it is minimal, and there will need to be careful management to ensure the nature reserve environment doesn't decline over time. A new planning application has been lodged to expand the estate further south with 209 additional dwellings (ref W/12/0027). The plans suggest a more considered approach to the design of open space and treatment of the brook frontage – but there would appear to still be considerable potential to improve the green infrastructure being offered by the scheme and to consider more fully the overall landscape setting of the valley. An approach that best suited the whole valley setting would be particularly important if more development followed this scheme<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.2.4 There is anticipated to be pressure in future to expand the settlement of Sydenham further south – beyond the present planning application. Access to this development area could be problematic and is unlikely to be possible from Whitnash due to the railway line. One solution could be to redevelop the Champion School site, whilst moving the school to a new site further south<sup>4</sup>. A school site will require a large area of free draining flat land for playing fields and it is not clear that sufficient space would be available for this without substantial ground modelling (formation of terraces). Such work would be likely to have impacts on the Whitnash brook landscape, ecology, the natural flood plain and the viability of existing agricultural land parcels. In addition, there would be a need for road infrastructure alongside the railway line and there would be severance of the existing access links between Whitnash and the open countryside – although well considered design might greatly mitigate this issue. Further detailed studies will be required to ascertain whether such development is achievable or the likely impacts acceptable. In the interim period it is suggested that any piecemeal development that would undermine a more considered long term approach should be resisted.

<sup>3</sup> We understand that application W/12/0027 was refused consent in September 2012.

<sup>4</sup> This approach has been mooted in a report prepared by Redline Town Planning and associates on behalf of AC Lloyd – *Comments on the Warwick District Council Core Strategy Preferred Options Document* – June 2009. It is understood that the expense of school relocation may mitigate this as a viable plan.

Land west and south of Radford Semele:

- 2.2.5 No specific proposals have been reviewed for development around Radford, but there are a number of sites put forward for the SHLAA exercise – the largest being R46 – School Lane. This 14-hectare site covers the entire 500m ‘green wedge’ between the two settlements. Even if a large proportion of this land parcel was retained as open space / green infrastructure, it would still replace the agricultural landscape and be likely to ‘urbanise’ the gap between the two settlements. It is thought likely that residents would feel that this diminished the setting of Radford, undermined the village character and increased the pressure for further similar development to the south – but consultation might prove otherwise.
- 2.2.6 As a compromise there may be some potential for developing two much smaller agricultural fields near the primary school – amounting to around 6 Hectares (refer to plan B2 – areas ‘3’ and ‘4’). With appropriate attention to sensitive design adjacent the neighbouring dwellings, new corridors for public access, and landscape buffers next to mature hedges, development on these sites could fit the village whilst enhancing the urban/rural interface. There may also be some potential for development adjacent the Ricardo factory – agricultural land that in early 2012 appeared to be set-aside. However, in the interest of maintaining the ‘green wedge’ this should be limited to the extent of the existing settlement (refer to B2 – areas ‘1’ and ‘1a’).
- 2.2.7 A large generally flat agricultural field at the western edge of Radford accessed from Spring Lane is identified in the SHLAA as R56 (and also partially as R21). It might be possible to develop this 6Ha site as a sustainable extension of Radford whilst retaining the main green wedge between the two settlements (pending further detailed studies). The site has mature hedge boundaries to the south and west as well as a landmark copse in the south-west corner. If adequately retained with landscape buffers, these features would help to integrate and enclose the new development. It is noted that dwellings on Williams Road and Godfrey Close back on to this site and that residents clearly utilise the present outlook and rural access. This would need to be sensitively addressed – perhaps with a setback and green corridor (refer to B2 – area ‘5’). Good provision of access paths and landscape infrastructure would be essential – as would appropriate access to remaining farmland. The study area also includes the adjacent recreation ground. If the community embrace the need for additional housing in the village, there might be an argument for a land swap – creating a new recreation ground in the R56 site. There would seem to be no immediate advantage to such a proposal unless it resulted in greatly enhanced community facilities.
- 2.2.8 A small tributary valley to the Whitnash brook is presently managed as a narrow agricultural field, the headlands of which appear to be well used as east/west footpaths (path No. W119b). This is an unusual and attractive landscape feature and will ideally be protected from development in future (refer to B2 – area ‘6’). South of this area is Valley Farm and rising land that can be accessed from footpath No’s W119 and W120. Development here would be prominent in views from Radford and from Sydenham. It will also constitute a ‘jump’ across the tributary valley noted and south of Valley Road. Such expansion of the village would not necessarily close the green wedge between the settlements but would certainly constitute a prominent extension of Radford Semele into a rural landscape and would ideally be avoided. This restraint would be likely to include SHLAA site R68, pending a detailed assessment of potential impacts.
- 2.2.9 The relative merits of other SHLAA sites south-east and east of the village have not been evaluated in this study. However, it is clear that development on higher ground east of the village is likely to be a prominent village expansion in views from the A425 and this is likely to give an impression of encroachment into rural areas. Land south of the village appears to feature permanent pasture, a small, possibly historic field pattern and mature trees and hedges that will greatly contribute to the landscape setting. Any development here would need to be very carefully designed to avoid the longer term degradation and loss of landscape pattern.

### 2.3.0 **Conclusions and Recommendations:**

2.3.1 The study area encompasses the existing ‘green wedge’ between Sydenham/Whitnash and Radford Semele and is essentially the Whitnash brook valley. Although there are some longer views out of the immediate setting from higher ground, the landscape is quite well contained and intervisibility with other potential development areas is not anticipated to lead to adverse cumulative landscape impacts. However, within the study area there is a great potential for development to cause detrimental impacts to the landscape setting, to lose the perception of separate communities and to undermine the viability of agricultural land parcels, the ecological functions of the brook habitats and the quality of local environment for existing residents.

#### Recommendations:

- Aim to retain a 500m ‘buffer’ of farmland between the two settlements as working agricultural land.
- The Parish of Radford Semele might consider opportunities for smaller scale village expansion along the western fringes of the village as indicated on plan B2. Such development would ideally include, and could facilitate, landscape buffers to protect and enhance existing landscape features and to mitigate impacts to neighbours and create a high quality residential environment. Indicatively there might be potential for up to 150 new dwellings in the scenario shown<sup>5</sup>.
- Land swap with existing recreational space is an option.
- Improved footpath access to the neighbouring countryside would be desirable. The higher ground south of Radford village should generally be protected from development as it would have considerable landscape impacts in the wider setting.
- Development on the Sydenham/Whitnash side of the valley should be guided by natural landscape constraints, perhaps ideally defined by the 60m contour and leaving the river corridor as green infrastructure and farmland. Extensive ground modelling to create building platforms above the flood plain are likely to create unacceptable landscape and visual impacts and will ideally be avoided. This approach would restrict and define the potential development area (refer to areas ‘10’ and ‘11’ shown on Figure B2). This might create space for 350-400 new dwellings (refer also to footnote 5).
- Maximising development into the ‘crook’ of the River Whitnash south-west of Radford Barn Farm (a small ‘knoll’ at 60m) would increase the landscape and visual impacts within the valley and would ideally be avoided (see ‘13’ on plan).
- A generous landscape buffer could provide benefits for new and existing residents as well as local biodiversity and landscape character. Design should follow the wider landscape pattern.
- The present access track between Whitnash and Radford Barn farm, which is also a popular footpath (W119), will ideally be protected. Even if existing hedges and track were removed in future, it would be desirable to retain a ‘green corridor’ on or near this route.
- Retaining a viable agricultural land parcel at the southern end of the study site would be desirable (even a smallholding) – see ‘13’ on plan. The permanent pasture here is likely to be beneficial for the ecology of Whitnash brook – pending detailed studies. There may be some opportunities for development related infrastructure (e.g. SUDS) to be fitted within a pastoral agricultural context.

<sup>5</sup> This is based on the WDC SHLAA calculation assuming that up to 50% of space is required for GI and other non-residential land-use.



Looking north from footpath W119 over the Radford / Sydenham gap. Development on the edge of Radford would be visible here - but a significant wedge of farmland could remain between the settlements. Note distant intervisibility with Lillington.



View north over potential development site at Radford Semele. A sensitive design approach would be required to ensure an acceptable relationship between new and existing development.



View north-west from W119 towards Sydenham and Whitnash. Expansion of Sydenham is likely to be prominent in the valley setting - but if an appropriate scale of green infrastructure is provided along the valley bottom (refer to plan B2) it might be acceptably integrated into the overall landscape.

Whitnash, Sydenham and Radford Samele

### **iii. Land north of Milverton, Leamington, Old Milverton, and Blackdown**

- 3.1.1 This land parcel is located within the West Midlands Green Belt and was therefore included in the original 2008 JGBS study as part of the study areas WL 5b (Old Milverton), WL 6a/6b (north of Milverton to Blackdown) and WL7 (Blackdown and West Hill).
- 3.1.2 The study area includes the large SHLAA site L07 – over 80 hectares of green field land lying north of Milverton and largely made up of arable land and allotment gardens. In the south-east corner of that area is SHLAA site L03, at the end of Bamburgh Grove, which is a 1.8Ha area of former farmland presently managed as meadow and scrub. SHLAA site L41 and L42 are parts of the former North Leamington school site and are proposed for redevelopment as housing and a care home respectively. The area of Blackdown Hill and West Hill is included in the 2012 SHLAA report as L48 and has been considered in Part 1 of this study. (Refer to Figure B3.)

#### **Existing landscape – summarised from the (JGBS) Study Findings – 2008:**

- 3.1.3 Some of the general conclusions in 2008 were:
- Old Milverton, and the landscape around it, is picturesque, closely interrelated with the Avon valley which runs to the west and north of it, and intervisible with the historic Guys Cliffe area (a registered historic park). The locality is well connected with footpaths and appears to be popular with ramblers. It should remain within the Green Belt.
  - The area north of Milverton is principally arable, with some signs of landscape decline owing to modern agriculture – but essentially a high value landscape setting that should be retained within the Green Belt. However, urban fringe land use types were noted near Blackdown and it was suggested that further study might identify opportunities for additional small-scale development of a similar character.
  - The area at Blackdown Hill and West Hill was considered to provide a successful urban / rural interface and that this area should also be retained within the Green Belt.
- 3.1.4 Principal issues for this study area include wider landscape impacts (where development on higher ground could potentially be intervisible with Woodloes Park, Leek Wootton and Hill Wootton), retaining (or improving) an attractive and accessible landscape for residents in the existing settlements, maintaining or enhancing views and perceptions of the settlements – especially from transport routes, and considering how the landscape could shape any future development to create high quality sustainable environments.

#### **3.2.0 2012 Review:**

##### **Old Milverton**

- 3.2.1 On reviewing Old Milverton in April 2012, some signs of landscape decline were noted that were not identified in 2008. Intensive arable farming appears to have resulted in loss of some hedgerows and a number of veteran oak trees (possibly remaining from former parkland or field boundaries) are also declining. No new planting or land stewardship initiatives were noted. Within the village, many dwellings (perhaps existing or former estate cottages) seem to require maintenance. Nevertheless the natural setting of this hamlet, the attractive church and churchyard of St James and the wider views over the Avon valley from local footpaths are still distinctive. We conclude that the hamlet and its setting should still be protected from development encroachment – but that a variety of environmental enhancement initiatives are required to reverse the apparent signs of landscape decline.
- 3.2.2 Old Milverton Road and Sandy Lane constitute narrow lanes that still generally retain a rural character and greatly constrict access to Old Milverton. The section of Old Milverton Road

back into the town is narrow and relatively congested. It can be concluded that any additional development on the west side of the Leamington / Coventry railway line is likely to exacerbate access problems and would require additional access infrastructure. Allotment gardens near the railway line appear to be well tended and fully occupied. The railway at this point emerges from cutting and is visually prominent and potentially noisy for a short section. The existing settlement edge (north of St James Meadow Road) is defined by a minor tributary of the Avon. Any expansion of the existing settlement here would need to resolve all these constraints whilst safeguarding the character of the Avon corridor to the west and the setting of Old Milverton to the north. In our view, these issues combine to disqualify the locality as a suitable option for urban expansion and we understand no representations have been submitted for development here.

#### North of Milverton and SHLAA site L07

- 3.2.3 The open landscape north of Milverton rises to a high point of 73m AOD just north of Sandy Lane. There is intervisibility with landmarks in Warwick, with the post-war residential areas of northern Leamington, with Leek Wootton, Hill Wootton and Blackdown. It is generally an intensive arable landscape, but there are well kept mature hedges with mature hedge trees (oak and ash) and local topographic variety that provides spatial and visual interest. The current transition from the post-war housing of Milverton to the open farmland to the north is quite abrupt, but trees and hedges along rear garden boundaries are maturing to soften this relationship. There are approximately 13 Ha of allotment gardens towards the centre of the site. There is a well used public footpath running east/west through the fields that provides local residents with access to the local landscape and views. However, in general, north Leamington has been identified in WDC reports as being deficient in unrestricted, accessible public open space. There is little access into or along the Avon valley or anywhere north of Sandy Lane. Sites adjacent to the Avon have been identified as potential Local Wildlife Sites (pLWS).
- 3.2.4 The area was included in a proposal for mixed use development including 1,500–1,800 dwellings in 2009 and is identified as site L07 in the 2009 SHLAA report. The proposed masterplan, promoted by Taylor Wimpey, indicates residential areas with a central ‘local centre’. (A subsequent ‘Planning and Design Statement’ (Taylor Wimpey/Barton Willmore) was published in August 2012.) Employment land is proposed in two blocks near the A452 Kenilworth Road. Playing fields and public open space are proposed as a landscape buffer alongside Sandy Lane. The existing allotment gardens are largely protected, whilst some opportunities for land-swap with new allotments within the new housing areas are promoted. Opportunities for public open spaces which could include recreation space, allotment gardens or amenity landscapes are developed to create a buffer with existing development, whilst existing ponds and low ground are suggested for SUDS infrastructure. An access spine road would be provided between the A452 and Guys Cliffe Avenue whilst secondary access would be provided from Sandy Lane and Windermere Drive. Whilst the proposal would require release of a substantial section of Green Belt, the proposals have considerable merit and with appropriate attention to detail design and construction quality have the potential to provide an attractive living environment for new residents whilst maintaining and perhaps enhancing recreational and open space assets for existing residents.

#### Cumulative impacts?

- 3.2.5 Part 1 of this study included a review of the Blackdown Hill and West Hill area and formulation of preliminary opportunities and constraints for development in this area. In addition SHLAA sites L41 and L42 (former school site) are to be redeveloped (construction of a development of 53 dwellings by AC Lloyd was under construction in May 2012 on the eastern portion of the site). These sites will be partially intervisible with each other and the larger L07 site to the west. On the L41 site, it has not been established to what extent existing playing fields will be retained as open space. This matter could have a considerable impact on

the perception of Leamington from the A452 Kenilworth Road. The Taylor Wimpey plan for L07 has proposed a landscape buffer along this road front that could enhance the gateway to Leamington if suitably designed, implemented and managed. If the playing fields were developed on the opposite side of the road, a similar approach would be required<sup>6</sup>. Views into the L07 site from the proposed A452 junction would also need to be carefully considered so to maintain the ‘leafy’ gateway and approach to the main town.

- 3.2.6 If all the SHLAA sites were eventually developed, detail design should consider longer views and site intervisibility. West Hill house at West Hill could be a distant focal point from positions within L07, and a ‘green wedge’ up to the house and its mature trees (as proposed in the indicative plan – see part 1 of this report, Figure A3) could provide an attractive interrelationship. Similar focal points within the L07 site might also be desirable – perhaps interconnected by green corridors, off road paths and cycleways to link all neighbourhoods around North Leamington. At the western end of the site, the greatest concern regarding the Taylor Wimpey masterplan is potential landscape and visual impacts from residential development on the higher ground at the north-west corner of L07. Development here is likely to be intervisible with Old Milverton, Leek Wootton and Hill Wootton, as well as some points within Warwick, at Woodloes Park and back towards Blackdown. There would also be some potential to see this development from road corridors including the A46 Warwick bypass. Further detailed analysis of these visual issues is required, and could perhaps be addressed with more substantial green infrastructure proposals in this portion of the site. Alternatively the masterplan could be ‘cut back’ to retain a wedge of viable agricultural land – as illustrated on the indicative Figure B3 – refer No ‘7’<sup>7</sup>.
- 3.2.7 A perception of major urban expansion at Leamington could be partly mitigated by screening from the major transport routes with considered design. The railway is largely in deep cutting and access roads into Leamington may be largely unaffected – pending traffic studies. However, if *all* the north Leamington SHLAA sites were to be considered for future development, the cumulative impact on infrastructure (especially roads and community facilities) would need to be carefully assessed. New distributor roads or major junction enlargements would be likely to have significant environmental impacts in this setting<sup>8</sup>. The proposed HS2 rail line might be intervisible from some positions near West Hill, but it is not anticipated to have adverse landscape impacts on the study site in general.

### **3.3.0 Conclusions and Recommendations:**

- 3.3.1 The areas north of Leamington are within the West Midland Green Belt and generally fulfil the required functions of Green Belt. However, if parts of this landscape were brought forward for urban expansion, well considered development might be largely contained by local topography and existing vegetation, whilst viable buffers of working agricultural land could be retained between Leamington and the outlying settlements of Old Milverton and the Wootton’s. Good design might minimise adverse impacts to the gateways to Leamington and to existing residential areas. Considered design, construction and long-term management could provide excellent green infrastructure with opportunities to reverse some areas of landscape decline and provide for local biodiversity and an improved recreational network. The prominent and distinctive landscape around Old Milverton should be protected and

<sup>6</sup> It is understood representations have been made regarding development on some of these playing fields.

<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that in the Taylor Wimpey/Barton Willmore *North Milverton – a new garden neighbourhood* (August 2012) they have proposed that this high land is retained as green infrastructure space. The new document had not been reviewed until autumn 2012 – but appears to broadly conform to the suggestions in this report.

<sup>8</sup> It is recognised that a strategic new road has been indicated in the WDC *Preferred Options Plan* (May 2012) linking the A46 to the A452 via Sandy Lane. Such a road would need to cross the River Avon and the Coventry railway line and is likely to have significant adverse landscape impacts – especially for Old Milverton.

enhanced as a multifunctional ‘green wedge’ based along the Avon Valley. This would also maintain a landscape buffer between development north of Warwick and Leamington.

Recommendations:

- Detailed assessment of infrastructure impacts if all the main north Leamington SHLAA sites come forward will be essential to ensure that secondary cumulative impacts are fully quantified. Avoiding potentially detrimental environmental impacts from major infrastructure might shape the extent of sustainable development considered possible in this area.
- The masterplan for the L07 site needs to consider potential wider landscape impacts. Prominent new residential development on higher ground will ideally be avoided. The most recent Taylor Wimpey report<sup>9</sup> would appear to acknowledge this.
- Where possible, design and implementation of green infrastructure needs to consider and complement the wider landscape pattern.
- All opportunities for local (and sub-regional) non-vehicular paths and networks need to be developed to ensure the best opportunities for a multi-functional landscape infrastructure. This will especially include east-west links around north Leamington.
- Seek to capitalise on existing topographic variety – especially by considering views and focal points.
- Explore opportunities for development to provide resources for new countryside links and landscape enhancement in surrounding Green Belt areas – notably north into the Avon valley.

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<sup>9</sup> Taylor Wimpey/Barton Willmore *North Milverton – a new garden neighbourhood* (August 2012)



Looking east from footpath W176 near the Warwick-Coventry railway - with North Milverton visible to the right. Retaining well used community assets such as the footpath corridor will be essential in any new development here.



Looking south from Sandy Lane towards North Milverton. It would be beneficial to retain mature landscape assets such as trees and hedges in any new development. Note that topography drops down from Milverton, but rises slightly behind the viewpoint before the Avon valley. This might help enclose development in this area from points further north.

**iv. Land north of Kenilworth, Burton Green, Westwood Heath, Coventry.**

- 4.1.1 This land parcel is located within the West Midlands Green Belt and was therefore included in the original 2008 JGBS study as areas C13a/b/c, C14a/b/c, K and K9. (A rearrangement of the study areas led to considerable overlap of Coventry and Kenilworth land parcels.)
- 4.1.2 The study area includes the large SHLAA sites C02 (land south-west of Westwood Heath Road), C03 (land adjacent Westwood Heath Road and Bockendon Road), C05 (sports ground at Burton Green), C09 (Lodge Farmhouse), C13 (Lodge Farm), C18 (land at South Hurst Farm – 99Ha) R58 (land at Red Lane), and a variety of sites around Kenilworth (K02, 03, 04, 07 (Kenilworth Golf Club), K10, 11, 12,13 and 14). (Refer to Figure B4.)

Existing landscape – summarised from the (JGBS) Study Findings - 2008:

- 4.1.3 Some of the general conclusions in 2008 were:
- The land between Kenilworth and Coventry is strategically important as a gap between the settlements. Linear development along the A429 at Gibbett Hill and Crackley has reduced this gap to less than 1km and expansion of the Warwick University campus is also reducing the gap. It was concluded that the remaining green wedge needed to be protected as Green Belt.
  - Similarly, it was felt that the landscape south of Westwood Heath Road was an important section of Green Belt, achieving the primary functions, but that post-war linear development through Burton Green and along Red Lane had diminished the overall landscape setting. It was felt that in general the area should be retained as Green Belt, but that there may be opportunities for minor infill development around Burton Green.
  - The overall landscape has some sections of well preserved historic landscape – with ancient woodland, lanes and well defined field patterns, and historic sites such as ‘Parliament Field’ near Kenilworth. However, modern agriculture had caused some landscape degradation and hedge loss. There is a reasonably good network of footpaths, including the Coventry Way along a former railway corridor. Some development around Kenilworth was considered to have set poor planning precedent (e.g. Princes Drive industrial area). Kenilworth castle is intervisible with locations north of Kenilworth.

4.2.0 **2012 Review:**

Warwick University:

- 4.2.1 Since 2008, the University of Warwick have continued their building programme within a campus setting, including substantial landscape infrastructure. This takes consideration of the wider landscape setting and greatly utilises a substantial block of woodland (Whitefield Coppice) to enclose the present phase of development from areas to the south and west. Nevertheless the large buildings are intervisible with sections of Crackley Lane and other lanes and paths in the locality, as well as existing farms and dwellings. It is noted that the University landholding extends beyond the present planning application boundaries to the A429 and the edge of residential property at Gibbett Hill and Crackley. Although presently managed as arable farmland, it is assumed that this area could be considered for further university expansion if ever required. Such development would effectively bridge the present gap between Coventry and Kenilworth.

HS2 railway:

- 4.2.2 In January 2012, the government confirmed their intention to go ahead with the HS2 high speed railway from London to the West Midlands and the proposed route passes through this study area. The preliminary proposals indicate that sections will be in cutting – and therefore it can be assumed that visual impacts may be very localised. However, one section will pass

over a viaduct at Finham Brook and over a culvert construction at the Crackley Brook flood plain. The railway will be at or near existing ground levels over small streams near Birches Wood Farm and South Hurst Farm, and is proposed to run along a section of embankment (up to 10m high) as it climbs from near Broadwells Wood up to Burton Green. This section is likely to be visible from dwellings 200–300m to the south, along Red Lane, and from dwellings 1km to the north along Westwood Heath Road, as well as from isolated intermediate dwellings. It is proposed that the railway will go into a tunnel under Cromwell Lane at Burton Green – following the line of the former Berkswell/Kenilworth railway presently utilised by the Coventry Way footpath.

- 4.2.3 Infrastructure related to HS2 will include an embankment and bridge to take Dalehouse Lane over the railway, a similar arrangement to take the A429 over the route and again for Crackley Lane. The railway will have overhead electric cables although it hasn't been established how tall or prominent these will be. The railway will sever several footpath routes – notably removing a section of the Coventry Way – so it is assumed new sections will be proposed to re-join the paths. Several blocks of woodland and nature reserve will be lost and presumably mitigatory replacement planting as well as visual mitigation planting will be proposed. Therefore there are likely to be a range of impacts and changes to the landscape beyond the immediate rail corridor if the project proceeds.

General Landscape matters:

- 4.2.4 The landscape in the study area has a variety of natural habitat including a good network of woodlands, hedgerows, streams, ponds and permanent pasture. Mitigatory works will be required where any development is likely to cause severance or disturbance to these features – whilst setbacks and suitable access to ensure long-term sustainable maintenance of these features would be recommended. Detailed studies and review may also highlight issues regarding historic landscape that have not been possible for this report.
- 4.2.5 The existing network of footpaths provides a good recreational resource for the adjoining settlements and some of the nature reserves have parking arrangements suggesting a wider catchment for existing visitors. Such resources would need to be protected if development was being considered within the study area. The LUC *Green Infrastructure Delivery Assessment* report promotes this area as a potential 'peri-urban park' with proposals for additional footpaths, cyclepaths, woodland, wetland and grassland habitat creation as well as interpretation and community projects. Such works could reverse landscape decline caused by the areas of more intense arable agriculture. The report suggests that Warwick University might be a beneficial delivery partner.

SHLAA sites:

- 4.2.6 No detailed plans or proposals have been seen for potential development for the SHLAA sites in this study area. A variety of representations have been made for sites near Burton Green and Westwood Heath Road and west of Bockendon Lane, around Lodge Farm. These include a 2.5 Ha arable field (C02 – access issues), a 3.2 Ha sports field (C05 – difficult access from Cromwell Lane), a small site at Lodge Farm itself (C09) and 30 Ha encompassing the mainly arable farmland around Lodge Farm (C13). Due to the access constraints of the smaller individual sites, it seems likely that the entire area would need to be considered as a whole to achieve a successful masterplan.
- 4.2.7 Taking this site as a 35-hectare unit, and using the WDC SHLAA parameters (50% of land for infrastructure and other uses and 50% for housing, and an indicative density of 35 units per hectare), this area might be suitable for around 600 dwellings. It would be essential to provide landscape buffers to ecological assets such as Black Waste Wood to the south-west and perhaps to heritage assets such as the moated features of Bockendon Grange to the south. In addition, if the HS2 development went ahead, there would be an anticipated need to mitigate

views south as the railway would be on embankment in this section. During fieldwork a gas main was noted (apparently running east–west across Bockendon Lane) which is likely to present another site constraint.

- 4.2.8 The Lodge Farm land is on relatively high ground (100–125m AOD) and development here would be prominent in views from the east and south as well as from existing residential development along Westwood Heath Road and backing on to the sites at Burton Green (Cromwell Lane). These existing residents (and road users) are likely to lose existing open and relatively long views towards Kenilworth to the south-east. However, there would be opportunities to enhance and extend existing green infrastructure including path links and open space and to perhaps enhance the character of the Westwood Heath Road corridor – e.g. with avenue planting. An urban extension in this location would not be significantly intrusive on the Coventry / Kenilworth landscape gap, although it would amount to encroachment into open countryside.
- 4.2.9 The 14.5 Ha area of farmland adjacent Bockendon Lane (C03 – adjacent to a potential SINC site) and the larger area of agricultural land with woodland around Hurst Farm (C18 – approximately an additional 50 Ha), if developed, would greatly expand settlement into the Green Belt. Most of the adjacent land along the northern boundary would be existing ‘urban fringe’ land use along the Westwood Heath Road – including allotments, sports pitches and detached dwellings with large gardens. To the east, the site would adjoin the Warwick University campus and to the south-east other land owned by the University. Therefore releasing this area for development would substantially fill the main land parcel of open countryside within the Coventry/Kenilworth gap and would have a major bearing on the setting of the University campus and the Westwood Heath Road corridor. In addition, if the HS2 development did proceed, then the remaining landscape buffer between settlement and the railway corridor would be reduced to 500m or less, which over time may increase pressure to develop remaining smaller land parcels. This is a section of attractive landscape with significant ecological value (ancient woodland and nature reserve) that ostensibly achieves all the purposes of Green Belt and we remain of the view that it should be safeguarded from development.
- 4.2.10 A number of SHLAA sites are identified around the northern fringes of Kenilworth. K02, K03 and K04 are all low-lying agricultural land that contain or adjoin Crackley Brook and Finham Brook and therefore have flood risk constraints as well as ecological and landscape values that would need protecting. The SHLAA report indicates access constraints whilst all three would reduce the existing landscape gap between Kenilworth and Coventry. If HS2 proceeds, they will lie within 300 metres of the corridor and at this point may be affected by the diverted A429 road works. All these constraints suggest these sites would be unsuitable for development.
- 4.2.11 Two sites (K13/14 – approx 12 Ha) have been promoted for development at Upper Ladyes Road adjacent the A429 Coventry Road. They consist of agricultural land and playing field and lie between Kenilworth tennis club and Princes Drive industrial estate. The site is on relatively flat and high ground (above 90m AOD) (although the Ladyes Hill estate to the south is constructed on rising ground and would overlook it). The SHLAA report suggests that access issues could be resolved and that the owner wishes to retain some space for sport and recreation. Although releasing this area for development would expand Kenilworth north and further reduce the width of the Kenilworth / Coventry Gap, the perceived impact on the wider landscape might be minimal. The Princes Drive industrial estate and the Crackley Hill housing along the A429 already push the settlement envelope northward and this area would not significantly extend it. The industrial estate creates a discordant feature in the wider landscape and more sensitive development beside it could help to better integrate the urban-rural interface. The southern boundary of the site (the A429) is part of the gateway to

Kenilworth, and a well designed development frontage, perhaps with avenue tree planting, might enhance this gateway to the town. There would be opportunities to create an improved non-vehicular route to the tennis club and north to Crackley Wood and the proposed ‘peri-urban park’. Woodland planting along the northern boundary could complement the wider landscape pattern and enclose the site from this direction. It is considered that these sites could be suitable for development and that they might contribute to improving green infrastructure in the area north of Kenilworth.

- 4.2.12 The only other SHLAA site noted in the study area is R58 at Red Lane. This is a small site and is unlikely to make a major impact on the wider landscape. It would need to be individually assessed to determine its suitability for development. In general, and without detailed assessment, our view is that expansion of the Red Lane linear development pattern will have fundamental sustainability issues (access/transport/services) and that this would mitigate against allowing further development here.
- 4.2.13 Areas to the south of the study area (north Kenilworth, Spring Farm, Camp Farm and adjacent the A452 Birmingham Road) were considered in 2008 to be high value areas of landscape that achieve the purposes of Green Belt and we remain of the view that this landscape should be protected from development.

#### **4.3.0 Conclusions and Recommendations:**

- 4.3.1 There is considerable development pressure on this important landscape at the interface of Coventry and Kenilworth. There is no doubt that this area fulfils the primary functions of Green Belt and is already a successful multifunctional landscape – with a good network of paths and ecological features. There is an established proposal to further enhance the localities green infrastructure assets by developing a ‘peri-urban park’. However, the proposed HS2 rail corridor would have a substantial impact on the setting, whilst it is not established to what extent Warwick University may wish to further develop their campus in future decades.

#### **Recommendations**

- Aim to retain the strategic gap between Kenilworth and Coventry – especially because of the potential impact of HS2 and future Warwick University expansion.
- Seek to develop and enhance the green infrastructure in the gap, developing the peri-urban park concept and aiming to link to the wider setting – east towards Baginton, west towards Balsall Common and Carol Green and south to Kenilworth and beyond.
- There may be opportunities for small areas of urban expansion in the north-west portion of the site near Burton Green and south, at the northern edge of Kenilworth. These areas are not anticipated to have substantial impacts on the wider landscape context and could offer local opportunities for improvements to green infrastructure, public access and the urban / rural interface whilst also facilitating sustainable, high quality development.



View looking east on Westwood Heath Road, south of Coventry. The road forms a boundary with the landscape gap between Coventry and Kenilworth. Warwick University has a substantial landholding within the gap, whilst the proposed HS2 rail corridor would also pass along it. However in general it is felt that the gap provides beneficial Green Belt functions and should be largely protected from other types of urban development.

## v. Coventry airport, Baginton and Bubbenhall.

- 5.1.1 This land parcel is located within the West Midlands Green Belt and was therefore included in the 2008 JGBS study as study areas C10a/b and C11a/b/c (not to be confused with the SHLAA area numbering).
- 5.1.2 The updated SHLAA (2012) indicates a number of sites within this study area. C01 (Russells Garden Centre), C04 (Land at Oak Lea), C07 and C08 (Land at Mill Hill – former landfill site), C10 (Land south of Baginton), C14 (Land north of Baginton), C15 (Land off Church Road), and C19 (Land at Baginton) – which encompasses all of the above in a 531 Ha area including Coventry Golf Course and a sewage works and vehicle test track located south of Coventry airport. At Bubbenhall, there are several small areas of land around the edge of the village that have been promoted for development – R57, R59, R60 and R61 – approximately 10 hectares in all – all greenfield sites.

### Existing landscape – summarised from the (JGBS) Study Findings – 2008:

- 5.1.3 Some of the general conclusions in 2008 were:
- Coventry airport, located as it is on a relatively high section of plateau between the Avon and Sowe valleys, is visually prominent in much of the surrounding landscape – especially as the airport infrastructure includes a variety of large warehouse buildings. Other non-rural features in the locality include sewage treatment facilities and a vehicle testing circuit. Especially around the airport the elements of former landscape are scarce. It was concluded that this area was not contributing greatly to the functions of Green Belt and that further study would be likely to identify further opportunities for development – with potential to enhance the wider landscape setting.
  - Baginton, and the Sowe/Avon valley landscape down to Stoneleigh, has many urban fringe features (sewage works, golf courses, market gardening, ‘horsiculture’ and semi-derelict areas) and yet retains many elements of an attractive and historic agricultural landscape – with a variety of topography and mature vegetation. It was felt that the area contributes to the purposes of Green Belt, but that there would be opportunities to improve these functions (e.g. through green infrastructure initiatives). Further study was suggested to ascertain opportunities for minor infill development around Baginton – the implication being that this might help resource the green infrastructure improvements.

### 5.2.0 2012 Review:

#### Roads and Road improvements:

- 5.2.1 Many people will know this study site mainly from the perceptions they derive whilst driving through it on the busy A46/A45 routes around Coventry. The large buildings at Coventry Airport can first be seen on the A46 from more than a mile north of Tollbar End. The busy Tollbar roundabout and its setting including the prominent Stonebridge trading estate probably give a negative perception of the area. However, the following section of the A45 as it crosses the Sowe/Sherbourne river valley provides some attractive views of permanent pasture, hedges and mature trees – with longer views north to the Jaguar Whitley car plant and towards the centre of Coventry, and south towards Baginton at the top of a mainly pastoral hillside. There is a low-lying area of self-naturalised scrub south of the Stivichall interchange and some glimpsed views of market garden areas before Coventry golf course – all providing a perception of slight urban fringe decline – before the A46 then passes into a more open agricultural landscape towards Stoneleigh.
- 5.2.2 The entire section of road is proposed for road improvements, most significantly at Tollbar End where a grade separated roundabout will be constructed to allow the A46 / A45 through-

traffic to bypass the junction in cutting. A range of peripheral landscape works are proposed including substantial surface water attenuation basins and landscape structure planting. These works are anticipated to substantially enhance the road corridor and to screen the road from neighbouring property.

- 5.2.3 The extensive environmental statements compiled by the Highways Agency in 2009<sup>10</sup> have been reviewed for this report. Ecologically the matrix of grassland, scrub, woodland, hedges and permanent pasture adjacent the A46/A45 is considered valuable. The Sowe / Sherbourne corridors included sections of nature reserve (designated Local Wildlife Sites) and *Ecosites* (sites of local biodiversity interest), and the nature of the corridors means that the sites have direct relevance to other more distant sites. (At the eastern edge of the study site, the Avon Valley provides a similar range of important ecological sites whilst north of Ryton the large Brandon Marsh SSSI includes a regional nature conservation centre.) Historically and culturally, the area also has interest with prehistoric, roman, anglo-saxon and medieval finds and features identified. A roman fort site and a medieval castle/settlement site in Baginton are both scheduled ancient monuments. The Highways Agency have also recognised the potential for local access severance caused by the existing and new roads and the proposed scheme includes a network of cycle/footpath and bridlepath connections.

#### Coventry Gateway:

- 5.2.4 In March 2012, the Coventry and Warwickshire local economic partnership (CWLEP) announced a proposal to develop extensive new employment sector land around Coventry airport – the Coventry Gateway project. This would include the sewage works, former landfill and vehicle test track at the southern end of the airport (part of the C19 SHLAA site and approximately 125 Ha in area) and land north of the airport between Baginton and the Stonebridge trading estate (also SHLAA site C19 and approximately 60 Ha in area). Due to the proximity of the airport, roads, and previous and existing industrial sites, these locations are unlikely to be suitable for residential urban expansion and employment sector development may be most appropriate.

- 5.2.5 However, access is problematic for these sites and the draft CWLEP masterplan proposes extensive road building to facilitate required access. These works would supersede the Highways Agency proposals and create new road access into land north of the A45/A46 corridor, to the existing Jaguar Whitley car plant and a new junction on the A46, whilst a second access would be provided from the Stivichal interchange. These road proposals are likely to have significant adverse impacts on the Sowe/Sherbourne corridors and wildlife sites that were not anticipated in the Highways Agency scheme. The proposed development north of the airport would be prominent in views from the A45/A46 corridor and would greatly alter the setting of Baginton, whilst the scale of development proposed south of the airport appears to include very large warehouse facilities that are anticipated to be visually prominent in the landscape from all directions, but especially Bubbenhall and the A445 to the south-east. The draft scheme indicates extensive ‘bundling and tree planting zones’ to mitigate the impact of development – but considerably more work will be required to ascertain how the scheme can be environmentally acceptable (refer to Figure B5).

#### Land south of Baginton:

- 5.2.6 The large SHLAA area C10 (62Ha) is located south-west of Coventry airport and is characterised as a relatively flat plateau area of land (80-85m AOD) featuring market gardening, ‘horsiculture’ and small holdings, with the land to the east sloping down to define the Sowe valley. A detailed representation in 2009 proposed the area as a ‘sustainable extension’ (for Coventry) and indicated four residential neighbourhoods across the plateau area including a primary school, recreational space and allotments and a mixed use local

<sup>10</sup> Highways Agency A45/A46 Tollbar End Improvement – Environmental Statement (March 2009)

centre at Church Road at the edge of Baginton. New woodland planting was proposed as a buffer to development at the edge of Chantry Heath Wood at the southern edge of the site, whilst a substantial area of the sloping land at the west of the site is proposed as ‘open space’. This area would have a multifunctional role, creating a *cordon sanitaire* for the sewage treatment works to the south-west, allowing for flood risk management of the River Sowe and for SUDS infrastructure from the development and providing / retaining a substantial green infrastructure corridor between Baginton and Stoneleigh.

Other SHLAA sites:

- 5.2.7 Other SHLAA sites have been proposed around Baginton. C01 is the 8 Ha Baginton Bridge nursery site, and C14 is the 13 Ha area north of Baginton. Both these sites are considered flood risk areas and would suffer adverse environmental impacts from the adjacent A46 / A45 roads. Both sites are likely to be visually prominent from the road and existing residential areas in Baginton. C14 has a range of ecological values. C07, C08 and C15 are all on or adjacent to historic parts of Baginton village and also have ecological value. Other constraints include previous landfill activity. Development here would have direct landscape and visual impacts for Baginton but limited impact on the wider landscape. The overall SHLAA designation C19 includes Coventry Golf Course. This site has significant environmental constraints – adjoined by the A46, sewage treatment works and the River Sowe – that would greatly reduce the area available for development. Access would be via Finham or Stoneleigh which is also likely to be a constraint. The north and east facing topography would make development here prominent from Baginton and positions to the east. All of these sites would need further detailed review – but they would appear to have significant constraints that would make them difficult to develop and less attractive as future residential settings. As employment sites they may conflict with existing residential settings.
- 5.2.8 A triangular wedge of land falls between the lane to Bubbenhall and the lane to Stoneleigh running south out of Baginton. This land has been included in the C19 SHLAA area and it forms a buffer between Coventry airport and surrounding landuse and the proposed ‘sustainable extension’ in SHLAA site C10. The landscape again features a flat area of market gardening and ‘horsiculture’, around Stags Head Farm, whilst the topographical drop down to Bubbenhall Bridge (Victorian / Grade II listed) and the River Avon is distinctive and likely to be historic. It seems likely that the strategic importance of this landscape buffer is going to increase and that the present arrangement of land use is appropriate for this purpose and worth retaining<sup>11</sup>.
- 5.2.9 A number of small SHLAA sites are indicated around Bubbenhall. R57 would be discretely located at the back of the village, and might be accessed from the existing Moat Close. It may impact on adjoining mature trees and hedgerow and the setting of the recreation ground. R59 (3Ha) is on the south-western edge of the village, but could relate well to the existing village footprint. There would be options for access and the potential to create an attractive boundary with the wider landscape setting. Footpath access would need to be retained / enhanced. R60 is the largest site promoted at Bubbenhall and would extend the village northward into arable land adjacent to the River Avon. It would not relate well to the existing village footprint, and may have flood risk issues. It would be intervisible with, and less than 400m from, the proposed Coventry Gateway expansion site, significantly reducing the width of the Avon valley flood plain. We would regard development here as undesirable for the wider landscape setting. R61 would be a prominent extension to the village adjacent the A445 and would not relate well to the existing footprint of the village.

Other cumulative impact issues:

<sup>11</sup> Whether this is achieved through its designation as Green Belt or through some special control order (‘*Strategic Green Wedge*’) is not clear. The relevance would follow confirmation that C10 is a ‘live’ application.

- 5.2.10 The proposed HS2 corridor will run south-west of the study site, south of Stoneleigh village but through Stoneleigh royal show ground. It will largely be in cutting, but will be near grade at the point where the A445 crosses the route (near Furzen Hill Farm). The road is proposed to cross the railway on bridge and embankment. Road users would therefore have an elevated view north towards the Coventry airport complex, and there may also be some brief intervisibility between the rail corridor and the airport. There would be similar bridge crossing arrangements for two other lanes in the locality - although intermediate woodland may not leave them intervisible with the airport.
- 5.2.11 The proposed redevelopment of the former Ryton car plant works (Prologis Park – 1km to the east) would, if implemented as proposed, establish another considerable complex of large industrial buildings in this landscape setting<sup>12</sup>. The site is intervisible with Coventry airport and would therefore be intervisible with the proposed Coventry Gateway expansion. Related cumulative impacts could include freight traffic on roads and junctions and night lighting (especially if both areas proceed as presently proposed).
- 5.2.12 The SHLAA area C06 is located at the southern edge of Coventry (east of Gibbet Hill) and is large at 270Ha. The site straddles King's Hill Lane and includes a section of Finham Brook and the local nature reserve and ancient woodland – Wainbody Wood. Therefore a sensitive design approach with mixed use development would be required. However, the site is on relatively high ground (above 80m AOD at the centre) and it is likely to be intervisible with the Coventry airport area and development proposed in SHLAA area C10. This might add to a perception of extensive encroachment into the Green Belt in the south Coventry area.

### **5.3.0 Conclusions and Recommendations:**

- 5.3.1 This is another area of landscape facing complex development pressures. Coventry airport and the adjacent employment sector land use is already prominent in the local setting and has some adverse impacts on the landscape. We feel the 2008 conclusion that this area can sustain further development whilst creating opportunities to improve Green Belt function is still relevant. However, it will be important to control the extent and scale of development so as not to push the zone of landscape and visual impacts far into surrounding countryside.

#### Recommendations:

- We have some concerns about the scale and extent of development proposed within the Coventry Gateway project – especially the potential extent of visual impacts for very large buildings and the various environmental impacts associated with a proliferation of road buildings. Further detailed environmental impact assessment will be required, hopefully leading to much more detailed landscape mitigation proposals. An appropriate scale of landscape infrastructure will be required (perhaps mixed woodland shelterbelts of at least 40–50m width) that in time might also have an economic value.
- The perception of the location is key for existing and future business success as well as the promotion of Coventry as a city. The current perception for those passing through the area on the A45/A46 is not wholly positive. The Highways Agency plans for road improvements seem to have striven to improve the road network, local access, the outlook from the road and local habitat provision. If this scheme is to be superseded by the Coventry Gateway road plans, then the demonstrable benefits for the locality need to be developed. A greater confusion of road building is very likely to have adverse impacts on perceptions of the locality.
- The potential cumulative impacts of development at Coventry Airport along with development at Ryton, the HS2 corridor and land towards Gibbet Hill need further detailed

<sup>12</sup> In October 2012 it was announced that Network Rail have bought the site from Prologis and intend to develop a road haulage distribution centre, with BREEAM rated buildings, to be open by July 2013.

review. Landscape mitigation works for the Coventry Gateway scheme must be designed to take account of such impacts.

- The proposal for a ‘sustainable extension’ in SHLAA site C10 has many positive attributes that, if successfully developed, could create an attractive residential setting, enhance the green infrastructure of the locality and help to protect the setting of Baginton. The potential negative impact of the airport, especially if its activities and importance expand with the proposed Coventry Gateway scheme, will need further review. We feel the triangle of land to the east of C10 (Stags Head Farm down to Bubbenhall Bridge) needs to be retained as a landscape buffer in some form – and the present land uses seem appropriate.
- Pending further review of the other SHLAA sites around Baginton, we feel there is limited potential to create sustainable high quality development on these sites whilst safeguarding or enhancing the present village environment. It may be more beneficial to utilise development levies from other sites to enhance the historic and ecological assets in and around Baginton and to improve the network of non-vehicular paths and green infrastructure corridors here.
- Two of the SHLAA sites at Bubbenhall would seem to have favourable attributes for sustainable development. The character of the village and the surrounding landscape setting need to be protected – especially in proximity to the Avon valley.
- Opportunities for improved linear green infrastructure along the Avon valley need to be explored. Paths here could link to the Centenary, Coventry, and Shakespeare Way footpath network, Bubbenhall, Ryton and the wooded landscape to the south-east. Such works and their establishment and management could again be funded by development levies.



Looking north towards Whitley and Coventry from Rowley Road, Baginton. In spite of existing industrial sites and the busy road corridors, the locality has significant landscape assets - especially in relation to the river corridors. In any new development this green infrastructure needs to be retained and developed as a resource that can benefit Baginton and the communities to the north.



View east from near Bubbenhall bridge - with the avon valley in the distance and existing buildings at the airport to the left. The large scale development proposed in the current 'Gateway' proposal must take account of the wider landscape setting. Proposed development at Ryton and the HS2 route will contribute to cumulative landscape impacts. Appropriate landscape mitigation will be required.

## **Appendix C Methodology / Bibliography**

- C.1 Desk top studies have included reviewing the previous JGBS and South Warwick landscape studies and WDC documents including the Local Plan, the 2009 Strategic Housing Land Availability Study (SHLAA), the Green Infrastructure Study (2010), the Green Infrastructure Delivery Assessment (LUC, 2012) and a variety of landowner representations and developer led studies for individual sites.
- C.2 The landscape assessment methodology employed has broadly followed advice set out in the published *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (GLVIA, 2002), with reference to the new updated guidelines (draft) document proposed for publication later in 2012.
- C.3 Reference has been made to previous landscape studies and plans of the area including:  
*The Countryside Agency Landscape Character Map of Britain* (1999)  
*The Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines* (1993)  
*The Warwick District Local Plan* (1996–2011 – adopted 2007).

### **A definition of sustainable development: Taken from the NPPF (2012):**

The UK Sustainable Development Strategy *Securing the Future* set out five ‘guiding principles’ of sustainable development:

- living within the planet’s environmental limits;
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;
- achieving a sustainable economy;
- promoting good governance;
- and using sound science responsibly.

Sustainable development is also encapsulated by the NPPF ‘core principles’ in paragraph 17 which can be summarised as follow:

- Provide a practical, flexible framework
- Find ways to enhance and improve the places people live / work
- Seek high quality design
- Consider landscape character, diverse communities, etc.
- Securing a low carbon future, considering climate change, etc.
- Consider environmental protection
- Encourage good land-use, recycle brownfield sites, etc.
- Encourage mixed use and multi-functional land use
- Conserve heritage
- Promote public transport / paths, etc.
- Promote health and social wellbeing.

### **A definition of ‘green infrastructure’<sup>1</sup>.**

At the heart of the concept is the provision of ‘multi-functional green infrastructure’ that can meet a wide range of social, economic and environmental needs. For example, a greenspace can function as a public open space, water retention/storage facility and as a wildlife corridor.

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<sup>1</sup> This definition was used by Chris Blandford Associates in their forward for the Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy (2007).

Green infrastructure is defined as the multi-functional network of 'greenspaces' and inter-connecting green corridors in urban areas, the countryside in and around towns and rural settlements, and in the wider countryside. Green infrastructure is a natural life support system providing benefits for people and wildlife. It encompasses 'natural greenspaces' (colonised by plants and animals and dominated by natural processes) and man-made 'managed greenspaces' (urban parks and designed historic landscapes), as well as their many connections (footpaths, cycleways, green corridors and waterways).

The provision of publicly accessible natural greenspace is a vital component in securing benefits for communities where this can be balanced with the needs of private landowners and biodiversity conservation objectives.

There are a wide range of functions that green infrastructure can provide. These include:

- Active recreation, passive recreation and quiet enjoyment
- Sustainable transport and public rights of way
- Network, links and gateways
- Social venue/meeting place
- Cultural/event venue
- Education and training
- Heritage preservation
- Landscape and townscape structure
- Wildlife habitat and biodiversity
- Sustainable water and flood risk management, energy use and production and waste management
- Green produce and food production
- Integration of new and existing communities
- Shared experience of greenspace creation

#### **A definition of 'ecosystem services'**

The term 'ecosystem services' is now commonly used in strategic planning policy and is often defined as 'what nature gives us'. The realisation that global warming needs to be tackled by a reduction in greenhouse gases going into the atmosphere has started to put a meaningful value on initiatives such as carbon sequestration – and this is a principal 'ecosystem service'. The Defra website says:

*Nature provides us with the very essentials of life. It gives us clean air and water; enables us to produce and gather food, fuel and raw materials from the land and sea; regulates our climate; stems flood waters and it filters pollution. It also gives us personal benefits from enjoying it that increase our health and happiness.*

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**richardmorrish**associates