

2. The Neighbourhood Area

Note In this or any of the following Sections references to the “Survey”, “Questionnaire”, “Action Plan” or “Consultation” are to the documents detailed in the Consultation Statement and explained in Section 4. Footnotes are cross-referenced in the supporting document “Additional Evidence and References”.

An Introduction to Kenilworth

2.1 Kenilworth as an area is defined in a number of different ways and in interpreting data and determining plans it is crucial to be clear on the area being referred to. This Neighbourhood Plan is defined on the boundaries of the Town Council for the Civil Parish of Kenilworth, which has a population of around 23,000 destined to grow to about 28,000 under the recently adopted Warwick District Council Local Plan (2011 – 2029). (see Map 1.1)

2.2 The three District and County Wards and Divisions presently covering Kenilworth also include the Civil Parish of Burton Green which itself includes much of the campus of the University of Warwick. Burton Green village itself has relatively little effect but the University, with several large student Halls of Residence, can significantly distort the picture in several ways, when published statistics are based on these larger areas.

2.3 Finally the CV8 postcode, taken by some to represent Kenilworth, stretches through a large rural area from Fen End to Wolston and includes Stoneleigh Park which is a major employment area in the rural area and can cause further distortion. Although the Neighbourhood Area is coincident with the Town boundary it will be necessary to reflect the further developments in the surrounding areas as these will look to Kenilworth for some services.

2.4 Kenilworth grew as a medieval settlement based on the Augustinian Abbey and the Castle both of which were nationally prominent until the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the Civil War when the Abbey and the Castle respectively were ruined. These two historical features of the Abbey Fields and the Castle ruins still govern the character and layout of Kenilworth and it is the Town Council's intention to ensure that the character that these features have engendered is preserved. The population of the Neighbourhood Area has more than doubled since the Second World War but despite this it has been able to preserve the intimacy, image and character of a market town.

2.5 Kenilworth is totally surrounded by a Green Belt which was established in the 1950s and which has been very effective in fulfilling the aim of maintaining a rural area separating Coventry and Kenilworth, although at its narrowest that gap is only 600 metres wide. This Green Belt is now under threat because the urban area has expanded until it became constrained by the Green Belt. The new Local Plan removes certain areas designated for housing from the Green Belt. Quite separately the proposed HS2 railway line passes through the narrow gap with the subsequent threat of related development in the future.

2.6 Because the Castle, with its associated historic Mere and park area, is on the western side of the town it has restricted development on that side and most of the

recent development has been to the East. The new Local Plan provides for even more development on the East reaching right up to the A46. This means that the areas to be developed are even further from the town centre making it essential that physical and community links are maintained and even strengthened.

2.7 Kenilworth is a town that supports a variety of community activities including several sports clubs and two amateur theatres together with numerous charitable and voluntary organisations and also several Church communities representing a variety of denominations. Furthermore, all of the schools are of a very good standard at all levels. All of these assets are bound in a reasonably tight community which sees the Town as a good place in which to live and to bring up a family.

Traffic & Transport

2.8 There is a limited choice of through road routes in the town so traffic is a major issue. In the Questionnaire "Improve road junctions at various places in the town" was rated the highest of ten possible projects in the town to which new developments should contribute. Traffic was the major common theme throughout the Consultation. From the many comments and responses people are fearful of the effect of the extra traffic from the future housing developments. The flow at St John's gyratory is approaching 30,000 vehicles a day and this flow is fairly constant throughout the working day, though there are rush-hour peaks.¹

2.9 Much of this traffic is on the Warwick Road, the main shopping street of the town, where there are air quality issues. The traffic flows through the town centre are now approaching those which 40 years ago justified the building of the A46 Kenilworth By-pass which itself now has traffic flows of motorway proportions. Although Glasshouse Lane and Birches Lane act to a certain extent as an Eastern Ring Road there is no equivalent route to the West and as a result traffic increasingly takes various rat-runs through the residential streets.

2.10 Car ownership in Kenilworth is significantly above the national average. From the latest available detailed census figures (2011) the number of households with two or more cars averages 45% across the three Kenilworth wards compared with 32% across England, and 40% across Warwick District. Conversely the number of households without a car is only 14% compared with 26% across England and 18% across Warwick District. Not surprisingly with such high car ownership the proportion of people driving to work is 70% which is a quarter higher than the national average of 57%. The number using public transport to get to work is only 6% compared with the national average of 17%.²

2.11 The high proportion of households with two or more cars means that many are used for the school run. When last recorded in 2011³ 43% of primary and 19% of secondary pupils travelled by car. The traffic around the primary schools is visible proof, and constitutes a recognised safety hazard. The matter has been raised as a concern at a number of the Community Area Forums and appears common to all

¹ Warwickshire County Council Cordon Survey April 2014

² Warwickshire Observatory 2018 analysis based on 2011 Census

³ Warwickshire County Council Survey 2011

the schools. The situation at the secondary school may even be worse when the school moves further from the centre as planned. A 20mph limit has recently been introduced in the road currently housing the secondary school.

2.12 A working railway line from Leamington Spa to Coventry, linking the Chiltern Line and the West Coast Main Line runs through the middle of Kenilworth but the station was closed in 1965 as a result of the Beeching Plan and later demolished. A new station at the junction of Priory Road and Waverley Road has recently been completed. It is necessary to improve links by all means of transport, including walking and cycling, with the Town Centre and the Castle. This could include better links with the local bus routes thus providing a public transport network that would reflect the needs of both the Town and the University of Warwick. There is limited car parking at the Station which may prove inadequate if the railway is very successful and the number of trains increases.

2.13 The planned HS2 railway Phase 1 route passes to the North of the Neighbourhood Area just cutting through a short portion of the boundary. (see Map 3.2) There may well be an adverse effect on traffic flows on a number of roads during the long construction period, particularly as that is likely to coincide with the building of houses in the proposed major developments.

2.14 The creation of an off-road Sustrans cycle route to the University of Warwick and along the Kenilworth Greenway to Burton Green has been a very successful project. However, cycling in the town has become a contentious issue as most roads are relatively narrow, so there is no opportunity to create a dedicated cycle lane and cyclists in some instances ride on the footway for their safety, but to the annoyance of pedestrians. WCC are already looking at possible improvements on cycle routes in the town. (See Map 2.1) The new large developments provide an ideal opportunity to provide safe off-road routes but it will be necessary to link them to the town centre and particularly to provide good safe routes to the allocated Secondary School site.

2.15 A major WCC project outside the Town will provide a dedicated off-road cycle route, K2L, from Leamington to Thickthorn. That will link through the new development sites to the allocated Secondary School site. It is only a short but challenging step from there to link to the Greenway on the Common and hence provide a complete route from Leamington, where many of the students live, to the University of Warwick. Similarly a route South from Thickthorn through the new sports developments will lead to Leek Wootton and link to the existing Sustrans 52 route to Warwick.

2.16 There are within the urban area of the town a large number of footpaths which cut through between roads. Indeed it is almost possible to cross from one side to the other via this means. Some of these are the remnants of a network of footpaths existing before development whilst others are created during the building of estates. Some belong to the County, some to the District, some to the Town and others are privately owned. Although many are remnants of rights of way, very few are formally identified on the definitive maps. Whilst all are suitable for pedestrians others are also possibly suitable for cycling and mobility scooters. An exercise has started to formally identify many of these footpaths but the backlog at the relevant

County department means that many years may pass before formal recognition is given. (see Map 2.2)

2.17 In contrast to the urban area the footpaths and bridleways in the rural area of the Town are fully recorded and well maintained by the volunteers of the Kenilworth Footpath Preservation Group.

Heritage

2.18 The first documentary reference to Kenilworth is in the Domesday Book of 1086 when as Chinewrde it was a small farming village of 17 households probably in the Castle Street/High Street area. In about 1120 the King granted Kenilworth to Geoffrey de Clinton and built the first Castle. In 1122 Geoffrey de Clinton founded a Priory which became an Abbey in the mid-15th Century the remains of which are now visible in Abbey Fields.

2.19 He reserved for himself enough land to make a park and by the mid-12th Century had also founded a "borough" along the Warwick Road the charter for a market being granted in 1268. The castle park also included a large lake or mere around the Castle which is said to have been the largest man-made lake of its time. Development of the Abbey in the 12th and 13th Century with substantial stone buildings being erected has determined the layout of Kenilworth to a great extent maintaining a large open area in the centre of the town now known as Abbey Fields.

2.20 In 1266 the Castle was besieged by the King for 6 months at the end of the Baron's War. In 1538 the Abbey was dissolved and the buildings were made uninhabitable, the brethren being granted pensions. The stone from the site was then used for various building works in the town including at the Castle. The old Abbey Gatehouse was later re-roofed for use as a house until the 19th Century. The principal surviving buildings are now the Abbey Gatehouse and the building known as the Abbey Barn, together with various standing pieces of ruin including the Chapter House wall. During the 16th Century a number of timber framed houses were erected in the town which still survive, however, the greater number of timber framed houses were erected during the 17th and 18th Century.

2.21 In 1649, at the end of the Civil War, Colonel Hawkesworth arrived with instructions from Cromwell to "slight" the castle and this was done, with the exception of the Castle Gatehouse which he converted into a dwelling. The Mere was drained and the castle park divided up between his men and made into farms. This saw the destruction of the Castle and left it as the ruin we largely see today. In 1765 all the common fields of Kenilworth were enclosed and divided up into allotments. This also led to the creation of the basic road pattern in Kenilworth today.

2.22 Changes occurred in the town with the growth of light industries relating to the agricultural economy, including horn comb making, tanning, fell mongering (skin preparation) and a short-lived Prussian Blue manufacturing business. Industrialists from Birmingham and Coventry saw Kenilworth as a pleasant town in which to build large mansions for themselves such as Kenilworth Hall whilst the town started to expand with cottages being erected in Mill End and St John's.

2.23 There are one large and three small Conservation Areas the Neighbourhood Area, though these subdivide into many character areas. There are 142 Statutory Listed Buildings in Kenilworth of which 5 are Grade I listed. (see Map 2.3) There are additionally 252 Historic Environment Records (HER) kept by Warwickshire County Council.

Social Infrastructure

2.24 Kenilworth grew as a residential town from the coming of the railway in 1844 with several periods of house-building, much of which initially filled the gaps in the original widespread town road network. In the last 60 years the population has more than doubled with intense building in the 1950s stopped by sewer constraints then a surge in the 1970s and 1980s stopped by the Green belt boundary. Release of Green Belt Land in the new Local Plan will lead to a further surge as it is a desirable area in which to live.

2.25 Kenilworth as a town is currently well resourced with facilities to support its social infrastructure. These include Primary Health facilities, Schools, a Children's Centre, though that is under threat of closure by the County Council, Day centres, Community centres and Halls. By mapping these facilities it is clear that the concentration of facilities is around the town centre. However, the planned development for housing is at the eastern edge of Kenilworth, which is a mile from the town centre. (see Map 2.4)

2.26 The one Secondary School is, at the moment, situated on two sites and is at capacity. Dual site funding was withdrawn a few years ago and so the school needs to be situated on a single site to remain viable. The existing school sites are accessible to large areas of the town and provide a high standard of academic education. Five Primary Schools are spread across the town and are full to capacity with the existing town population.⁴ The existing schools in the town therefore cannot absorb the anticipated increase in school population when the new housing developments are built.⁵ As part of the District's new Local plan the existing Secondary School sites have been allocated for housing and a new School site allocated as part of the developments to the East of the Town. The housing developments will require a new primary school but a site for this has not been specifically allocated in the new Local Plan. The developments at Burton Green and King's Hill, which are outside the Neighbourhood Area, may also affect the demand for school places in Kenilworth.

2.27 Both local GP surgeries are situated in the town centre and are expanding their properties. Neither site has sufficient space for any increase in car parking for either staff or patients. If car parking in the town centre is not expanded it will restrict access to facilities there. Primary health care also includes care provided by nurses, midwives, physiotherapists, dentists, opticians and pharmacists. These professional services are also mostly provided in the town centre with the exception of a

⁴ Warwickshire County Council August 2018

⁵ Warwickshire County Council August 2018

pharmacist which offers extended services in Leyes Lane and a dentist in High Street. (see Map 2.5)

2.28 The Cemetery for Kenilworth is in Oaks Road. It is owned and operated by Warwick District Council. Although some additional land was allocated some years ago there have been drainage problems in that area and so the space available for additional interments is limited. There will be a need to allocate additional cemetery space somewhere in the area around Kenilworth but no site has been identified. The churchyard at St Nicholas has been closed for many years apart from interment of ashes. A Memorial Garden has recently been created at St John's Church but there will be no interment there.

Sports and Leisure facilities

2.29 Kenilworth is well-provided for by both local authority and private sporting facilities, quite apart from school playing fields. Warwick District Council runs two sports hall and two swimming pools. One of these is an outdoor pool which is a particular attraction in the area. Private clubs include a rugby football club, two association football clubs, two cricket clubs, a tennis, squash and croquet club, a golf club, a bowling green and several indoor gyms. There is a running club and also several informal running groups, but there is no running track or athletic facility in the Neighbourhood Area. These existing sports facilities are situated all around the urban area and most are very well used. (see Map 2.6)

2.30 Warwick District Council is currently investigating the upgrading of its sports and leisure facilities in Kenilworth involving significant investment. This will include consultation with other sports facilities including the University of Warwick where a new sports hall is to be built only two miles outside the Neighbourhood Area where facilities will be available to local communities.

2.31 At the Warwick District Council owned complex at Castle Farm there is currently a Leisure Centre with sports hall (4 badminton courts) and a gymnasium over which are facilities for the Scouts and Guides. Outside there is a small children's play area, a pétanque terrain, a skateboard ramp area and informal sports pitches, plus the inevitable car park. The area is not only in the Green Belt but also not far from the sensitive area of the Castle and related Park and Fishponds, which are also a Scheduled Ancient monument. There are therefore restrictions on development but there are two ways in which this area may be improved resulting in substantial investment in this key facility in the Neighbourhood Area. The area has been designated for outdoor sport in the new Local Plan

2.32 Firstly the new Local Plan envisages the purchase of additional land in this area so that the Wardens Cricket (and football) Club can relocate here to free their land on the eastern side of the town for housing. There will be a need to build a clubhouse so that they are relatively self-contained, though there will be some shared facilities. However it is essential that open public access to some pitches is maintained as the other football club, a junior one, already plays there, together with informal use by organisations such as Scouts and Guides. The area will remain in the Green Belt.

2.32 Secondly WDC Is considering an upgrade and extension to the Leisure Centre itself, with internal rearrangements, the relocation of some external facilities and increased car parking. This will provide a better offer for the town.

2.33 Access is an important issue as the combined use would lead to greater use of the current access point at Fishponds Road. In the Survey such expansion was generally supported, but the Consultation indicated very great concern from nearby residents about the effects of traffic and access on residential roads.

2.34 The other sports hall is on the current main site of Kenilworth School. The Meadow Community Sports Centre has a 4-badminton court sized sports hall and a floodlit all-weather pitch. This facility is operated by Warwick District Council in partnership with the School. Any future location for the School should include a public access facility of at least equivalent size and facilities.

2.35 The facilities provided by the many private clubs are greatly valued. In the Survey a question which referred specifically to the Rugby Club and the Wardens ideally staying in the town scored highly.

2.36 The Rugby Club, which is possibly the largest membership organisation in the town after the Scouts and Guides, is located in two separate areas on the eastern side of the Neighbourhood Area which were in the Green Belt. The new Local Plan removes these areas from the Green Belt and allocates them for housing developments. The proposed new location for the Rugby Club is south of the town between the Warwick Road and the A46. Part of the site, including the proposed access, is actually in the Parish of Leek Wootton and therefore outside the scope of this Plan. All this area will remain in the Green Belt. The A46 and the railway will provide substantial and definable boundaries for a sports site but access can only be obtained from Warwick Road.

2.37 The Wardens Cricket Club is currently located in the Green Belt on the eastern side of the Neighbourhood Area just north of the Rugby Club. The Local Plan proposes that this area is also removed from the Green Belt and allocated for housing development, and that the Wardens will relocate to Castle Farm.

2.38 The Kenilworth Cricket Club is located to the south of the Neighbourhood area on the east side of the Warwick Road. This adjoins the area proposed for the Rugby Club relocation and some housing. Here it will be necessary to establish the spatial relationships between the two clubs and the housing proposed in this area.

2.39 Kenilworth Town Football Club was located in the south west of the town. There is currently no adult team and the ground is not being maintained. The junior teams are active and play at Castle Farm.

2.40 Kenilworth Golf Club is located to the north-east of the Neighbourhood Area. The new Local Plan proposes a housing allocation reaching Crewe Lane just across that road from the Golf Club but there should be no direct effect. The threat to the future of the Golf Club actually came from the proposed building of the HS2 railway which initially carved away part of the course, threatening the viability of the Club. Protracted negotiations and the Petitioning of Parliament have resulted in revisions which hopefully should enable the Club to flourish.

2.41 The Tennis, Squash and Croquet Club is located in the Green Belt to the north of the Neighbourhood Area. No housing developments are proposed in that area which will affect the club.

2.42 The Sports and Social Club on Rosemary Hill includes a crown bowling green which is the only remaining green in the town.

Tourism

2.43 Tourism is extremely important to Kenilworth as it brings jobs to the town and boosts the local economy. The main visitor attraction is Kenilworth Castle, a medieval castle with a very colourful history which is situated on the north-west side outside the Town Centre. Other attractions are Abbey Fields, Kenilworth Abbey Barn and Gatehouse, St. Nicholas' Church, High Street, Parliament Piece and The King's Arms and Castle Hotel (now Zizzi's restaurant and flats) where Sir Walter Scott stayed before writing the novel "Kenilworth". The Castle is not easily accessed either from the Town Centre or from High Street as the one-time main entrance is no longer open. There is a need to improve the physical links between the Castle and the Town Centre to benefit the local economy. Tourists need to be guided between the various attractions and there is support for improving signage and information.

Employment

2.44 Ever since the railway came to Kenilworth in 1844 and particularly since the line to Birmingham opened in 1883 Kenilworth has been a dormitory town providing a more pleasant place to live than the industrial cities. This is more than ever true today as much of the industrial land in the town has given way to housing. Every working day there is an outflow of residents to the Universities of Warwick and Coventry, to Leamington Spa, Coventry, Birmingham and even to London. This outflow is partially balanced by an inflow of employees in the relatively lower paid retail and catering industries which form much of the current employment in Kenilworth

2.45 The only significant employment areas currently within the Neighbourhood Area are the rather tired industrial estates at Princes Drive and Farmer Ward Road. The other industrial area at Common Lane is no longer scheduled for employment in the new Local Plan and could be developed for housing or other uses. Land is now allocated at Thickthorn for employment. Scattered throughout the town are a significant number of professional offices and self-employed people but most of these work in essentially adapted residential properties with very few modern offices existing in the town. Recent Government policy has meant that some of the purpose built office accommodation has been converted to residential under permitted development.

Retail

2.45 The Town Centre of Kenilworth has seen various changes over the last few years which have been mainly as a result of the 2004 Town Centre Plan which was developed at the time when Waitrose proposed opening in the Town. This involved many meetings, workshops, and lengthy consultations with members of the community, District, Town and County Councillors and officers. Those proposals were continued in the 2014 Action Plan where they gained further approval following the wide consultation that was carried out. There is therefore every reason to follow the direction that was approved locally, especially as many parts of that plan have already been completed. This Neighbourhood Plan thus gives an opportunity to complete those proposals with amendments to them where necessary.

2.46 There remain a significant number of independent shops though some of the usual high-street names have now established here. Like many similar towns there are a large number of charity shops. A feature of the Town Centre is the wide variety of coffee shops and restaurants. The result of this mix is that shop vacancy rates have remained low in comparison to much of the surrounding area in the last few difficult years. (see Map 2.7)

Green Infrastructure

2.47 The Green Spaces are a highly valued feature of Kenilworth. (see Map 2.8) However despite areas like Abbey Fields the amount of public access open space within the Neighbourhood Area is less than the District Council standard⁶ and most of the larger areas are towards the North of the Neighbourhood Area.

2.48 The Abbey Fields are in many respects the heart of Kenilworth and an essential part of its history and character. They are owned and maintained by Warwick District Council. The whole area enjoys protection as a Scheduled Monument and has for many years therefore only seen a gradual evolution of existing uses. The area is not a Nature Reserve and the maintenance of trees, grass and other natural features should ultimately be for the benefit of the residents and visitors. Abbey Fields are highly regarded by the residents, scoring exceptionally strongly in the 2013 Survey as an invaluable recreational asset which must be preserved and protected. However, this high regard reflects the many different uses to which the Fields are put, and hides the conflicts which can exist between the many different current uses.

2.49 Kenilworth Common is owned by Warwick District Council. It is a valuable asset for the Town and in the 2013 Survey scored highly that it should be preserved in its natural state. It must be protected from any further incursions. Although once open heathland most of the area is now wooded. The whole area is registered as a Local Nature Reserve and managed by Warwick District Council in that way. The Common was bisected by the building of the railway and in more recent years a cycle way has been created which for much of its length follows that same route. This cycle way links at one end to The Greenway and at the other end ultimately

⁶ Warwick District Council Green Infrastructure Study – Final Report 2010

links to Abbey Fields, providing important green links. There is also a bridleway across the Common with a ford at Finham Brook but no vehicular traffic attempts to use it.

2.50 Tainters Hill, owned by Warwick District Council, is a triangular open space off the Coventry Road near the old Water Tower. Although registered as a common and therefore protected, the area is a bit of an anomaly as the only management of the area is routine cutting of most of the grass whilst trees and undergrowth are essentially left untouched. There are opportunities to make more of this area on an important entry route into the town from Coventry.

2.51 Parliament Piece is an area of grazing land on the opposite side of the Coventry Road to Tainters Hill. Tradition has it that the name derives from its use for that purpose during the Siege of Kenilworth Castle in 1266 but it is equally possible that it may have been a camping site for Parliamentary forces during the English Civil War. It was donated by Miss Helen Martin to the Open Spaces Society with a covenant controlling uses. In turn the management has been passed to Warwick District Council. It is meadowland in the Green Belt and a favourite dog-exercising site. After the hay has been cut cattle are grazed for a few weeks. There is also a pond in the middle. The management of the area appears to work well and so no changes to the regime appear necessary.

2.52 There used to be several brickworks in Kenilworth using local clay. At Cherry Orchard the resulting pit was used as a tip for rubbish but as much of this was organic the ground is unsuitable for any use currently and provides an open space belonging to Warwickshire County Council which for safety reasons is currently officially closed to the public. It is unfortunate that such significant land in the middle of a large residential area cannot be used and in due course it hopefully will become available for public access. A small part of this area forms the recycling centre for the area which is very active.

2.53 Crackley Triangle lies between the Leamington to Coventry railway line and the disused Birmingham line which now forms part of the Greenway. It was overlooked when originally defining the Green Belt and an attempt to redefine it as Green Belt in the previous Local Plan in 2008 failed for legal reasons. This was unfortunate as it forms a natural green corridor linking the Common to the Green Belt and it lies in the very sensitive Crackley Gap which is the only defence against coalescence with Coventry. In the Survey the idea to give it Green Belt status scored highly. However, it enjoys no protection and planning permission has now been granted to build 93 houses in the area although deliverability is difficult because of limited access.

2.54 The Greenway is a linear park, owned by Warwickshire County Council, along the route of the disused Kenilworth to Birmingham branch line which was closed in the Beeching cuts. A branch from the Greenway forms part of the National Cycle Network 52 to the University of Warwick, and provides a link between Kenilworth and the University. In addition to mixed use with pedestrians and cyclists the Greenway becomes a bridleway suitable for horses as it leaves the urban area. The Greenway also links to Crackley Woods and other rural areas so it is important that all these accesses are maintained. It may be that this area is a suitable opportunity for the HS2 Environmental Funds, but much is outside the Neighbourhood Area boundary.

2.55 Behind School Lane the continuation of the Greenway, having crossed the Common and skirted the allotments, runs alongside Finham Brook as a combined cycle and pedestrian path between Park Road and Bridge Street. This area, which does not appear to have a name, is mostly floodplain and therefore remains undeveloped though it enjoys little statutory protection. It is suitable for designation as a Local Green Space within this Plan

2.56 Crackley Wood is an area of Ancient Woodland which has only recently been included in the Town boundary and thus lies in the Neighbourhood Area, although most people would have assumed that it already was in Kenilworth. It is owned by Warwick District Council and registered and managed as Local Nature Reserve. No changes in the management regime appear necessary.

2.57 Knowle Hill is an area of public open space owned by Warwick District Council and so designated as part of the housing developments in that area in the 1970s and 80s. It was presumably identified because the slope was unsuitable for house-building. It is mostly open but there is a belt of trees along the road, which are registered common land. It forms a useful informal area and is also protected as a Local Nature Reserve.

2.58 Beehive Hill is a Warwick District Council owned and maintained informal football pitch which is probably used more by dog-walkers than footballers. There have been suggestions to use this area to extend the allotments which are next door, but this would restrict public access and has been resisted so far.

2.59 Castle Park -The Mere area to the West of Kenilworth Castle which once was flooded to form the Great Mere is now drained and is registered as a Park and Garden of Historic Interest Grade II* although it is mainly privately owned agricultural land. The public access is by right of way on certain footpaths and bridleways. There is a possible scheme currently being investigated which would allow limited flooding of the area to hold back water at times of exceptional rainfall and reduce the flooding risk to properties downstream in the town. In the Survey opinion was almost balanced in favour and against the scheme. An idea to create a leisure facility on a re-flooded Mere received a very clear rejection and has been abandoned. For the last 30 years the area has been the site of the very successful Bonfire and Firework Display organised by Kenilworth Round Table which attracts well over 10,000 people and is rated one of the best in the Midlands.

Small Parks and Recreation Areas

2.60 Bates Memorial Field which includes a small children's play area, is an open area surrounded by the 1950s housing developments of Thornby Avenue, The Gardens, Arden Road, and Hermitage Way. There are two entrances, one from The Gardens, and one from Hermitage Way.

2.61 On the 12th May 1961 the land was handed over to Kenilworth Urban District Council by Mr Percy Bates as land suitable for two football pitches. It now provides the official open space for this part of the town. Bates Memorial Field has been upgraded with new tree planting, a refurbished children's play area and with security bollards to the entrances.

2.62 St John's Playing Field is off Guy Road and was a planned open space within the high-quality post-war public housing development built by Kenilworth Urban District Council. It provides a recently refurbished children's play area with an informal sports pitch and other open space for the St John's area of the town. It adjoins a care home, and housing for people with reduced mobility, and incorporates paths suitable for wheelchairs and mobility scooters. Perimeter trip rails have been installed to prevent unauthorised vehicular access.

2.63 Ebourne Recreation Park is off Ebourne Close, it was always an open area in the town and has many trees, these have been recently pollarded to open up the area and improve passive surveillance. The children's play area has been upgraded and new pathways have been provided around the park providing good access for pushchair and wheelchair users. Security bollards at access points have also been installed.

2.64 Glendale Avenue Park is a small children's play area providing a useful local facility behind Stoneleigh Road.

2.65 There exist throughout many of the residential parts of the town areas of informal open space which have either occurred by chance or more often been a requirement within a development. There are, for example, two particularly large areas off Dencer Drive and another area with a pond at Stansfield Grove which are all part of the 1980s development. In some cases ownership is not clear and there have even been instances where annexation by neighbours has occurred. Wherever possible such space has been identified and included as "Amenity Greenspace". (see Map 2.4) Similar space will also result from the requirements of the WDC Local Plan and the Garden Suburb policy applied to future developments. These areas must be protected.

Allotments

2.66 Allotments have proved very popular in Kenilworth and demand has outstripped supply for many years despite the acquisition of additional land. A number of the larger original plots have been split to help meet demand. There are currently about 350 tenants and a net waiting list of 70. The plots are well-maintained and far from the waste land found in some towns. For historical reasons the ownership and management of the different sites is somewhat complicated.

2.67 It will be essential to allocate adequate space for allotments in the new housing developments both to meet the additional demand and to attempt to catch up on the backlog. No changes are envisaged on the existing sites, although there have been suggestions that the Beehive Hill allotments could be extended into the adjacent open space. This has met with opposition.

2.68 Odibourne Allotments in the floodplain of Finham Brook and Spring Lane Allotments by the railway line are owned by the Town Council and run by the Kenilworth Allotments Tenants Association. Beehive Hill Allotments are relatively new and were created to help meet the demand. They are owned by Warwick District

Council but also run by the Kenilworth Allotments Tenants Association. Gypsy Lane Allotments are privately owned and run by the St John's Allotment Association.

Trees and Woodland

2.69 Not surprisingly for an area which was once part of the Forest of Arden there are large numbers of trees in both the urban and rural areas of the Neighbourhood Area. Many are in private gardens but there are some heavily wooded areas and there are many trees in open spaces such as The Abbey Fields, Parliament Piece and the Golf Course. There are also a significant number of highway trees. Many trees are protected by virtue of being in a Conservation Area and others by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) applied by Warwick District Council.

2.70 The area proposed for development on the east of the Neighbourhood Area contains a large number of trees including some spinneys and a private arboretum off Crewe Lane. As many mature trees as possible should be preserved in the development and if any tree loss is necessary to enable development replacement planting should be provided. When the 1970s major development took place that particular area was given a blanket TPO but most of the area now identified for development enjoys no such protection.

2.71 Significant Wooded areas include Crackley Woods (Ancient woodland), Kenilworth Common, Knowle Hill, Bullimore Wood (Ancient woodland), Thickthorn Wood (Ancient woodland) Glasshouse Spinney, Glasshouse Wood (Scheduled Ancient Monument), Chase Wood (Ancient woodland) and Black Hill Wood.

Rural Area

2.72 Within the Neighbourhood Area there is a significant rural area in the North West stretching to the Solihull border. In the area there are few roads but a number of working farms and some isolated houses. Although there have been changes in agricultural practices the area has changed little in recent years and no significant changes are envisaged. Much of the area is accessible via well-maintained public footpaths.

