Report to Area Panel Meetings – March 2016

Agenda item 6

Walsall's Local Plan Consultation
- Site Allocation Document Publication Draft
- Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan Publication Draft; and
- Community Infrastructure Levy Draft Charging Schedule

Introduction

This report advises the Area Panel about the latest stage of consultation on three planning documents that are intended to help deliver regeneration, growth and environmental protection, and invites comments about the proposals themselves as well as ideas about how they might be publicised in local areas.

These documents are:

a) The Site Allocation Development Plan Document (SAD). This will allocate sites for development for housing (general housing, and gypsy and traveller sites), employment and other uses across the borough (outside the town and district centres);
b) The Area Action Plan (AAP) for Walsall Town Centre. This will allocate sites for development and propose improvements to support the town centre; and
c) The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule. This will allow charges to be placed on certain types of new development that will provide funding for infrastructure.

The three documents are being prepared and consulted about in several stages. The Area Panels in September and October 2015 received presentations about the previous stage of preparation, the "Preferred Options" stage for the SAD and AAP, and the "Preliminary Draft" stage for the CIL Schedule. A large number of representations were received in response to this consultation, in particular about proposals in the SAD. The latest drafts of the documents attempt to address these representations, as well as other issues that have arisen. Cabinet on 3rd February 2016 approved the Publication Draft SAD and AAP Documents, and the CIL Draft Charging Schedule, as the basis for public consultation.

The consultation commenced on 7th March and is to run for 8 weeks, to 3rd May. The Council's officers would like to receive as many views as possible and welcomes suggestions on how the local community should be consulted and arrange for further detailed discussions of the issues. As well as writing to a large number of organisations and individuals, including many people who provided their contact details during the previous consultation stage, officers are also social media, and events and exhibitions are being arranged at venues around the borough. Copies of the documents have been placed in all libraries.

The attached appendices provide more details about the documents, especially those for particular areas. Many of the proposals are unchanged from those in the previous stage. However, there have been some significant changes. In particular,

the number of locations identified as potential gypsy and traveller sites has been significantly reduced.

The appendices are as follows:

- Appendix 1 - Timetable for plans
- Appendix 2 – Summary of Borough-wide issues
- Appendix 3 – Significant changes to documents since previous stage
- Appendix 4 – Ward map/s showing draft proposals for each area

Recommendations

The Area Panel is asked to:

i) Comment on the proposals as they affect the Area;

ii) Identify forthcoming events, organisations and individuals that may wish to be informed or receive presentations about the documents.

How to view and respond to the consultation

The consultation documents and response forms are available to view and download online at www.walsall.gov.uk/planning_2026 and hard copies are available to view at each library across Walsall and at the First Stop Shop, Walsall Council. All comments should be received before the end of the consultation period of 3rd May 2016. We might not be able to take into account any comments received after this date.

Planning officers can be contacted by phone at 01922 658020 or by email at planningpolicy@walsall.gov.uk

A drop-in event is also taking place for members of the public to meet and discuss with officers proposals for across the borough as follows:

Event	**Location, Date and Time**	**How to attend**
Site Allocation Document (SAD), Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP), and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	Thursday 7th April 2016 – 1pm 7pm at Committee Room 3, Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall	No need to register to attend please just turn up.

As this is the "Publication" stage, any representations about the SAD or AAP should address whether the plans are considered "sound". This means raising questions about the following points:

- **Positively prepared** – does the plan allocate enough land to meet all needs for the various uses where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with placing development in the right locations?

- **Justified** – is the plan the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives?

- **Effective** – can the proposals in the plan be delivered over its period? and

- **Consistent with national policy** – is the plan in accordance with national policies?

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Date
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Appendix 1 – Timetable for Plans

The table below sets out the proposed timetable for the SAD and APP (with the CIL work to be progressed in parallel)

Local Development Scheme PROGRAMME SUMMARY – 2014-2016

Preparation of Site Allocation Document and Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan

Issues and Options	
Issues and Options Reports Public Consultation	22nd April - 3rd June 2013 - 6 weeks consultation
Preferred Options	
Cabinet	22 July 2015
Preferred Options Reports Public Consultation (including draft plans)	7 September to 2 November 2015 - 8 week consultation
Towards Publication, Examination and Adoption	
Cabinet	February 2016
Publication (final draft plan) Public Consultation	*7 March to 3 May 2016*
Council Approval for Submission	June/ July 2016
Submission to Secretary of State	July/ August 2016
Examination (by Planning Inspector)	Autumn 2016
Adoption (by Council)	End 2016

Appendix 2 – Borough-wide Summary of Issues

A summary of issues being considered through the plans which relate to the Borough have been set out below as reported to Walsall Council's Cabinet on 3 February 2016. More localised issues and matters will be discussed at the Area Panel meeting.

Housing

The Core Strategy requires that a minimum of almost 12,000 net new homes should be accommodated in Walsall over the period 2006-2026. Of these, 5,238 had been completed by April 2015 and planning permission has been granted for a further 4,703 homes. The SAD therefore identifies land for more than 2,000 additional new homes, as well as confirming which of the sites that already have planning permission for residential development should continue to be allocated for this use.

A key challenge is to ensure that sites to be allocated for residential development are deliverable. Most of the potential housing sites are on previously-developed land, which often has challenges including addressing contaminated or unstable ground, relocating existing or former industrial uses, and land assembly. The Core Strategy expects 25% of housing on sites of 15 dwellings or more to be affordable where this is financially viable. The SAD seeks to continue this approach, recognising that whilst the requirement is unlikely to be met in every case, Registered Social Landlords (Housing Associations and others) have made a significant contribution to the provision of affordable housing in Walsall.

As well as affordable housing, there are needs to find sites for other types of specialist housing. The SAD proposes the allocation of sites for housing and the consultation will explore whether some of these should be specifically for elderly people or other particular groups. The SAD shows possible sites to meet identified needs for Gypsies and Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople.

The SAD has taken account of the importance of planning for housing in locations that can provide suitable environments. They should also be accessible to services, such as shops, schools and health facilities as well as to jobs and other opportunities.

The SAD shows that the borough's quantified housing needs to 2026 should be capable of being met without the development of any Green Belt land.

Land for Industry

The aim is to provide the right portfolio of land to meet industry's needs over the 2016-26 period, as well as attract as much inward investment as possible. But some land currently in industrial use could be considered for release to other uses, notably housing, if and when no longer needed. The SAD will therefore:

- allocate high quality and local quality land to meet targets set in the Core Strategy; and
- allocate some local quality employment land that could be released to other uses, as long as safeguards are met, the industry can be relocated

satisfactorily and these other uses do not constrain remaining adjoining industry

There is no need to use further Green Belt and greenfield land for employment purposes.

Local Centres

Walsall currently has 34 local centres helping to meet day-to-day convenience shopping and service needs. Following a Local Centre Survey the SAD proposes to:

- revise the boundaries of local centres, where appropriate, to ensure they are accurate and up-to-date;
- show the Local Centre boundaries as allocations on the Policy Map;
- allocate development opportunities where appropriate; and
- designate Blackwood Road in Streetly as a new local centre for allocation.

Open Space and Community Facilities

The borough has a large number of open spaces of various types and in various conditions. These can offer important benefits in terms of recreation and amenity (as well as in environmental terms), but there are issues about the ability to maintain existing spaces as well as in seeking to maximise their potential. In this context the SAD proposes to:

- safeguard existing green space, including playing fields, through the designation of all sites >0.4Ha, encompassing significantly more than were allocated within the UDP (in accordance with the Council's Green Space Strategy). These sites will be the priorities for maintenance and improvements, where health and well-being can be best-supported and other, including environmental, objectives can best be met; and
- identify that in a limited number of cases where green space sites are either surplus to requirements, or (in accordance with the Council's Green Space Strategy) the quality and value of certain sites is so low that retention as green space is not desirable (following an analysis of different types of spaces in different parts of the borough, and in consultation with the relevant service areas) such sites present development opportunities, from which planning contributions can be collected to improve existing provision.

The SAD proposes an approach to community facilities whereby:-

- existing facilities will be safeguarded where viable and practicable;
- new facilities should be planned where they are most accessible to the communities they are intended to serve (often in town, district or local centres); and
- there will be a need to recognise that some facilities might no longer be viable and the sites should be considered for other uses (in accordance with the other policies in existing and emerging plans).

Specific provision for community facilities will often depend on where new development, especially housing, will be located. The previous 'Preferred Options' consultation asked whether there would be a need to make specific allocations to protect existing community facilities or to propose new or extended facilities. No proposals were received. National planning policy, the Core Strategy and relevant

‘saved’ policies of Walsall’s UDP provide a sufficient framework to consider proposals for new or improved facilities or proposals that might lead to the loss of facilities as and when they arise.

Similar points apply in relation to education and health facilities. Children’s Services are considering proposals to improve or expand several existing schools across the borough to address an increase in the numbers of children, but Government requires that new school sites should be brought forward for academies or free schools. Improvements to health provision are also targeted towards existing sites. Neither of these measures will require the allocation or safeguarding of sites in the SAD. However, the SAD proposes the inclusion of a policy (to update the existing UDP Policy) for the Gorway Campus of Wolverhampton University. This is to seek to address potential issues and conflicts between developments on the site, as the existing campus is maintained and/or enhanced, and the surrounding area.

Environmental Network

Whilst it is recognised that some environmental assets exist in isolation, many aspects of the environment are linked because of movements between them (of air, water, wildlife, people) and /or because areas can play a variety of roles (an open space might be important for recreation, for amenity, for nature conservation, and it might play a role in managing water and mitigating flood risks). In this context, the SAD seeks to enhance links between assets in a network to provide an attractive environment over a large area for leisure and recreation, as well as to benefit other nearby land uses such as housing or business.

Within this approach, and taking account of the relevant legislation on environmental, nature conservation and heritage issues, the is proposing to do the following.

- Confirm the boundary of the borough’s Green Belt is to remain unaltered, prioritising the regeneration of the Borough’s urban area, safeguarding the countryside and environmental resources (notably agricultural land).
- Reflect, and safeguard, the Borough’s existing environmental assets, including
  - sites designated for nature conservation
  - ancient woodlands
  - watercourses
  - historic environmental assets (generally and with specific policies for Great Barr Hall and Estate, and for the Highgate Brewery)
- Identify priority locations, where it will be important to have
  - particular safeguards
  - new or improved linkages
  - environmental improvements
  - measures to enhance the range of environmental functions that can be served
  - new environmental provision (including as part of the regeneration of brownfield sites).

This should complement the proposals for open spaces (above) and also in respect of transport (where attractive green linkages should encourage walking and cycling).

Water is important not only in environmental terms, but also in respect of issues of flooding and drainage. Whilst the risks of flooding from watercourses are relatively limited, there are issues of surface water flooding complicated by the historic pattern of development and by the drainage system. To address the issues the SAD is proposing to:

- steer development towards areas that are at lower risk of flooding, and, where necessary, ensure development in higher risk areas is only permitted when mitigation is provided to prevent flooding on-site or elsewhere;
- allocate land within the environmental / open space network suitable for flood mitigation measures; and
- encourage the use of sustainable urban drainage (SUDS) where this can be accommodated in or to serve new developments.

Waste Management

The Core Strategy identifies important waste facilities in Walsall (Strategic Waste Sites) that need to be protected, sets targets for delivery of new waste management capacity (to meet European and national targets to increase recycling and reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill), and identifies the most suitable types of location for development of different types of facility. The SAD will show how we are proposing to address the BCCS requirements by:

- providing an update on the capacity and types of waste infrastructure Walsall needs to provide between now and 2026, taking into account changes to existing capacity since the BCCS was prepared;
- safeguarding the most important of Walsall's existing waste facilities – the Strategic Waste Sites – from other development that could compromise their continued operation;
- identifying industrial sites suitable for development with new enclosed facilities for re-use, recycling, recovery, treatment or transfer of waste;
- identifying opportunities for final disposal of residual waste (waste that cannot be re-used, recycled or recovered for energy), for example at quarries that will require restoration over the plan period;
- requiring new or amended waste management proposals to deal with any potential harmful effects on local residents and the environment.

Minerals

The BCCS seeks to safeguard mineral resources of local and national importance and important minerals infrastructure (in line with national policy guidance), and identifies potential 'areas of search' for extraction of sand and gravel and brick clays, which are likely to be required to support future development and growth over the plan period. The SAD will show how it is proposed to address the BCCS requirements by:

- defining the extent of a minerals safeguarding area (MSA) covering all mineral resources of potential local and national importance in Walsall;
- safeguarding the most important of Walsall's existing minerals infrastructure (such as aggregates recycling sites and the rail-linked cement distribution facility at Fairground Way) from other development that could compromise their continued operation;

- identifying permitted mineral extraction sites where extraction of minerals is already permitted and may take place within the plan period;
- defining 'areas of search' for sand and gravel extraction, which could contribute towards future supplies of aggregates in the West Midlands;
- defining an 'area of search' for brick clay extraction at Stubbers Green which is expected to provide the nearby brickworks with supplies of clay; and
- identifying requirements for new or amended mineral extraction proposals and for quarry restoration to ensure that harmful effects are minimised and maximum benefits are obtained through landscaping and restoration.

Transport

The SAD is proposing to continue to safeguard land for transport purposes, notably the Walsall – Brownhills rail alignment and road alignments to improve access to industrial areas.

But the SAD is not going to safeguard any land for the 5Ws metro line as this is not considered deliverable. Instead, it is envisaged that the rapid transit link to Wolverhampton and Wednesbury will use the existing rail lines, therefore not necessitating the safeguarding of any other land for this purpose. Initial work by Centro shows that the best rate of return is rail passenger services between Walsall and Wolverhampton, but other rapid transit options are currently being considered.

Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan

A substantial piece of evidence has been commissioned on market interest and the viability and deliverability of development in Walsall Town Centre. The key headlines of this work, as reflected in the AAP, are as follows.

1) Reduced town centre **floorspace targets** following a review of the economic viability of the centre and the potential development sites.

- Comparison retail target of 6,000 sq.m. gross additional floorspace up to 2026 (on top of existing commitments). The Core Strategy indicative target was 85,000 sq.m. gross of additional comparison floorspace.
- Convenience retail target of 1,500 sq.m. gross additional floorspace by 2026 (on top of existing commitments).
- Office target of 73,000 sq.m. between 2006 and 2026. The Core Strategy indicative target was 220,000 sq.m. of additional office floorspace.

This allows for more accurate targets, whilst still being ambitious in pursuit of the regeneration strategy for the centre as set out in the Core Strategy.
There are no targets for residential developments in the town centre but the plan allocates for residential uses where this is most appropriate use and is supportive of residential as part of mixed use development where a suitable environment can be created without jeopardising the role of the centre as a commercial location.

2) **The need to consolidate and focus investment.** The Town Centre Demand Study by DTZ is very clear that to deliver development within the centre investment needs to be focussed to create demand, protect current uses and to avoid diluting the positive impact of investment. The draft plan therefore:

- Slightly consolidates the Primary Shopping Area to focus retail development in the heart of the centre;
- Identifies sites in the Primary Shopping Area for reconfiguration and development for retail uses;
- Provides a strong stance in relation to edge and out-of-centre retail development (including Crown Wharf);
- Focuses most office development within the Gigaport area to create a high quality office location;
- Focuses leisure development at Walsall Waterfront to create a leisure destination; and
- Focuses the expansion of Walsall College to create a high quality learning campus.

3) **The increased role of leisure** in making for an attractive town centre. The DTZ study argues that leisure is a key factor in attracting visitors and increasing spending in centres. The draft plan therefore:

- Has a flexible approach to uses within the Primary Shopping Area so that uses such as A3 are not restricted, whilst ensuring the shopping function of the centre is not prejudiced;
- Has policies to support the delivery of the cinema scheme and other leisure (including restaurants) at Waterfront;
- Identifies sites that are suitable for leisure, hotel and banqueting developments; and
- Proposes to protect and enhance existing facilities such as The Gala Baths, The New Art Gallery, The Leather Museum, Walsall Library and Walsall Town Hall.

4) **Improvements to the town centre environment**. The DTZ study highlights the importance of creating a high quality environment that is attractive to visitors, especially within the shopping area to help compete with other centres, out-of-centre developments and online shopping. The draft plan:

- Identifies areas where improvements are needed in linkages between area and uses;
- Identifies areas where public realm investment is needed especially within Park Street; and
- Looks to protect the character of the centre, historic assets and the environmental infrastructure such as the Canal, whilst ensuring a high standard of design for new developments.

5) **Making the town centre accessible**. The DTZ study recognises the importance of having an accessible centre and the draft plan includes:

- allocating land for proposals to increase the capacity at Bradford Street Bus interchange, the most deliverable scheme to improve bus provision in the town;
- proposed locations for at least one multi storey car park to serve the centre;
- allocating land at Station Street to allow for a rapid transit route connected to Walsall Railway Station;
- promoting pedestrian and cycle links to and throughout the centre;
- improvements to the town centre road network.

Community Infrastructure Levy Draft Charging Schedule

The draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan has identified a funding gap of just under £180 million for borough-wide infrastructure, such as open space, transport, highways and the public realm. The commissioned CIL viability study assessed the viability of development and the amount of headroom available to enable a charge to be placed on development to help towards funding the boroughs infrastructure. The study concluded that residential and certain types of retail development would be able to carry such a charge in some, but not all, areas of Walsall.

The key matters coming out of the study and covered in the Draft CIL Charging Schedule are as follows.

- Rates of between £25 and £100 per sq.m. for residential development depending on the area where the development would be located ('charging zones'). This would equate to approximately £8,000 per dwelling in the highest value areas to £2,000 in the lower value areas (or as low as £400 in lowest value areas if a £5 nominal charge is set) in comparison to around £4,500 per dwelling under the old S106 regime. The study has evidenced that these rates have been set at between 46% to 74% below the maximum amount available from development, so as not to affect delivery or viability.
- Rates of between £75 and £100 per sq.m. gross for larger retail developments (for non-food retail warehousing and food-based retailing respectively) in any location. We do not have comparable data for retail development contributions and the proposed rates would introduce costs on this form of development. The study evidences these rates have been set at between 73% and 88% below the maximum amount available from retail development, showing more than sufficient headroom to ensure this would not affect the delivery or viability of retail development.
- The forecast for receipts from CIL up to 2026 is £4.5M (or £5.6M if a £5 nominal charge is set in low value areas).
- It has been decided to consult on a proposed nominal £5 per sq.m. charge on residential development in lower value areas, and for developments of up to and including 40 flats, which would otherwise be set at a zero rate.
- After the adoption of CIL, use of Section 106 would be restricted to affordable housing and to site-specific matters only (such as vehicle access, junction improvements, public transport, air quality, and flood mitigation / resilience measures) and cannot duplicate items of infrastructure already funded through CIL.
- The final list of infrastructure projects to be funded through CIL (Regulation 123 List) is to be decided following this consultation.

Appendix 3 – Significant Changes to Documents since Previous Stage

Site Allocation Document

SITE ALLOCATION TABLES
Details added of assets and constraints affecting individual sites and sites in general.

These show for example which sites contain historic or environmental assets such as listed buildings or nature conservation designations, or lie within flood zones.

ACCOMMODATION FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS
Previously identified potential sites at Mill Street (Ryecroft), Bentley, Darlaston and Bloxwich (Royal British Legion Club at Broad Lane Gardens) are no longer proposed for this use and are now allocated for general housing only.

Dolphin Close, Goscote, is proposed to be the only new large site (10 pitches). Sites at Goscote Lodge Crescent, Goscote Copper Works and Former Metal Casements (Birchills) would only be used if Dolphin Close does not come forward. In any case, only one of these four sites would be used (the whole of each of the other sites would be allocated for general housing only) and only part of each of the first three sites would be used (the remainder would be developed for general housing).

Two supporting documents have been prepared. These comprise:

- Draft Revised Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment: This describes recent and emerging changes in national legislation, policy and guidance, and provides a revised estimate of the total number of additional sites that are required.
- Site Assessment Matrix: this explains how the sites to be allocated have been selected from the larger number of potential sites identified at the Preferred Options stage.

Town Centre Area Action Plan

There have been little significant changes between the Preferred Options and Publication Stage for the Town Centre AAP. A number of changes have been made to strengthen policy wording in light of consultation responses but none of these alter the purpose of the policies. There has been a slight amendment to the land allocated for Walsall College expansion but otherwise there have been no changes to the site allocations.

Appendix 4 – Ward Maps

KEY

- Town and District Centres
- Borough Boundary

BCCS Regeneration Corridors

- 5 Loxdale - Moxley
- 6 Wednesfield - Willenhall - Darlaston
- 7 Bloxwich - Birchills - Bescot
- 8 Hill Top
- 15 Brownhills

Homes for Our Communities

(a) General Housing

- Land Allocated for New Housing Development - HC1

(b) Accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

- Existing Traveller Sites to be Safeguarded - HC4
- Existing Showpeople Sites to be Safeguarded - HC4
- Existing Temporary or Personal Traveller Sites to be Made Permanent - HC4
- New Showpeople Sites - HC4
- New Traveller Sites and Existing Sites to Be Expanded - HC4
- New Traveller or Showpeople Sites - HC4

Site Extents

- Existing Travellers Sites or New Traveller or Showpeople Sites
- New Traveller Sites and Existing Sites to be Expanded
- Existing Temporary or Personal Traveller Sites to be Made Permanent
- TSE

Providing for Industrial Jobs and Prosperity

- Existing High Quality Industry - IND1
- Potential High Quality Industry - IND2
- Retained Local Quality Industry - IND3
- Local Industry Consider for Release - IND4
- New Employment Opportunities - IND5
- Employment Sites Vacant at January 2016

Strengthening Our Local Centres

- Local Centres - SLC1
- Local Centres Development Opportunities - SLC2

Open Space, Leisure and Community Facilities

- Open Space - OS1
- University of Wolverhampton Campus - UW1
- Cemetery Extension - UDP Saved Policy LC11
- Greenways (Complete, Protected) - UDP Saved Policy LC5
- Greenways (Proposed) - UDP Saved Policy LC5

Environmental Network

- Green Belt - GB1
- Site of Special Scientific Intrest (SSSI) - EN1
- Local Nature Reserves (LNR) - EN1
- Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) - EN1
- Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC) - Linear - EN1
- Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC) - EN1
- Ancient Woodland - EN2

Water Environment

- Flood Zone 2 - EN3
- Flood Zone 3 - EN3
- Source Protection Zones - UDP Saved Policy ENV40
- Canals - EN4
- Indicative Route of Hatherton Branch Canal Restoration - EN4

Historic Environment

- Conservation Area - EN5
- Listed Buildings
- Locally Listed Buildings
- Scheduled Monuments
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Great Barr Hall and Estate and St Margaret's Hospital - EN7
- Highgate Brewery - EN6

Sustainable Waste Management

- Strategic Waste Sites - W1, W2
- Other Existing Waste Sites - W1, W2
- Potential Waste Sites - W1, W3, W4

Sustainable Use of Minerals

- Minerals Safeguarding Area - M1
- Mineral Infrastructure Sites - M2, M3
- Brick Works - M6
- Permitted Minerals Sites - M4, M5, M7, M8, M9
- Minerals Areas of Search - M4, M5, M7
- Potential New Minerals Sites - M7

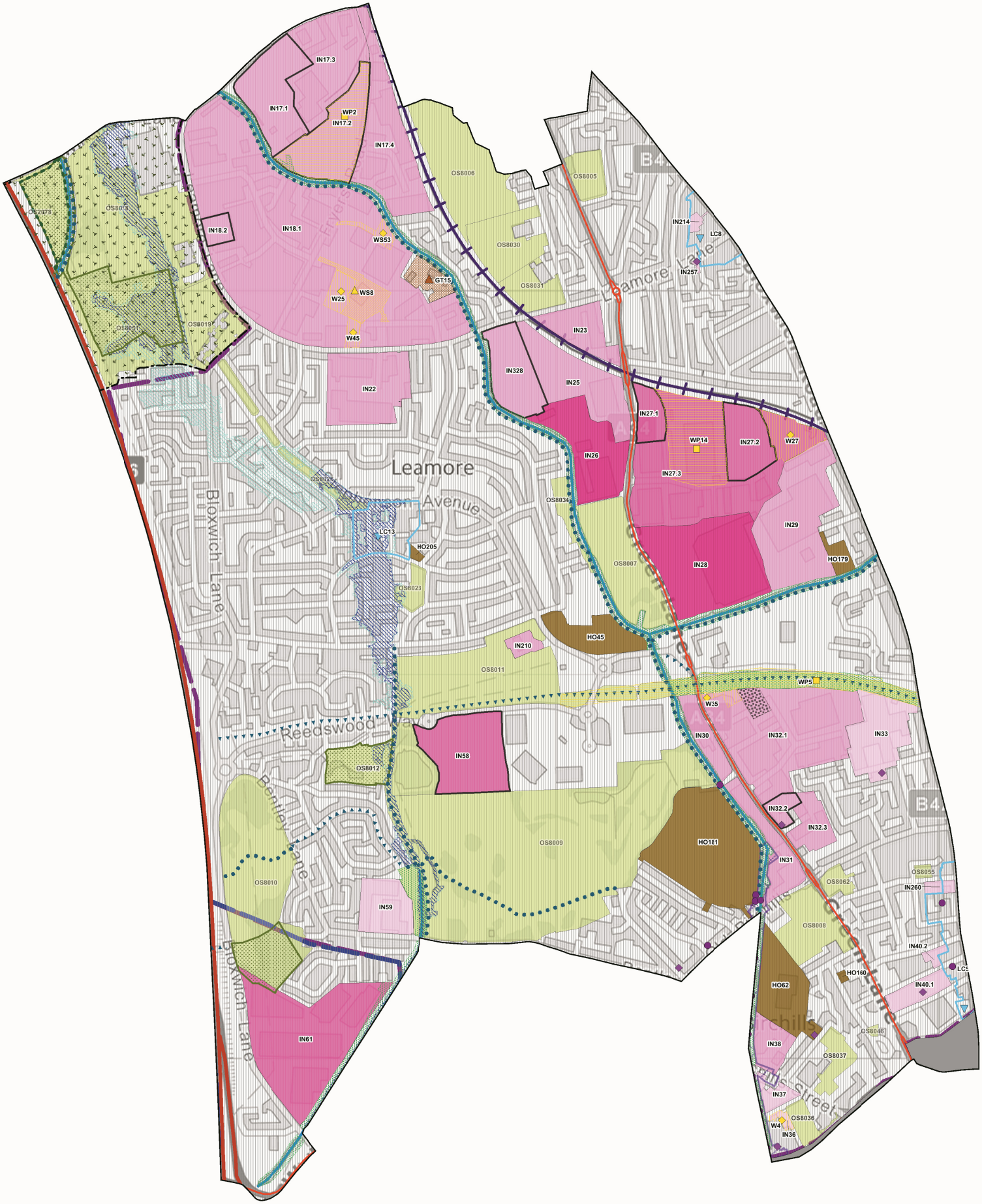
Strategic Transport Network

- Strategic Highways Network: Motorways - UDP Saved Policies T4(a), T5
- A5 - UDP Saved Policies T4(a), T5
- Key Road Network (Draft) - UDP Saved Policies T4(a), T5
- Strategic Rail Network - UDP Saved Policy T3
- Bradley Lane Metro Park and Ride - UDP Saved Policy T3

Birchills Leamore

Not to Scale

N



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Bloxwich East

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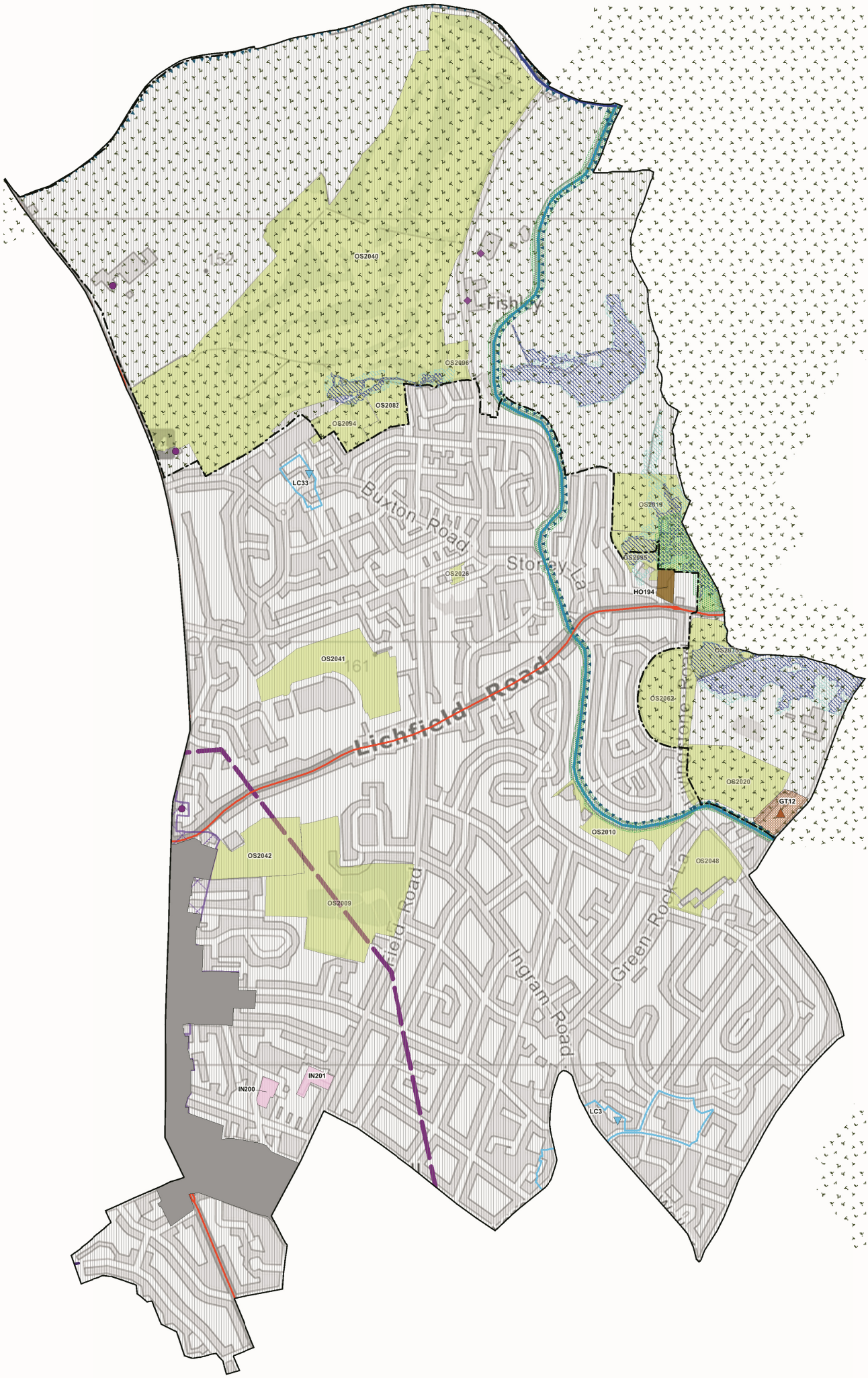
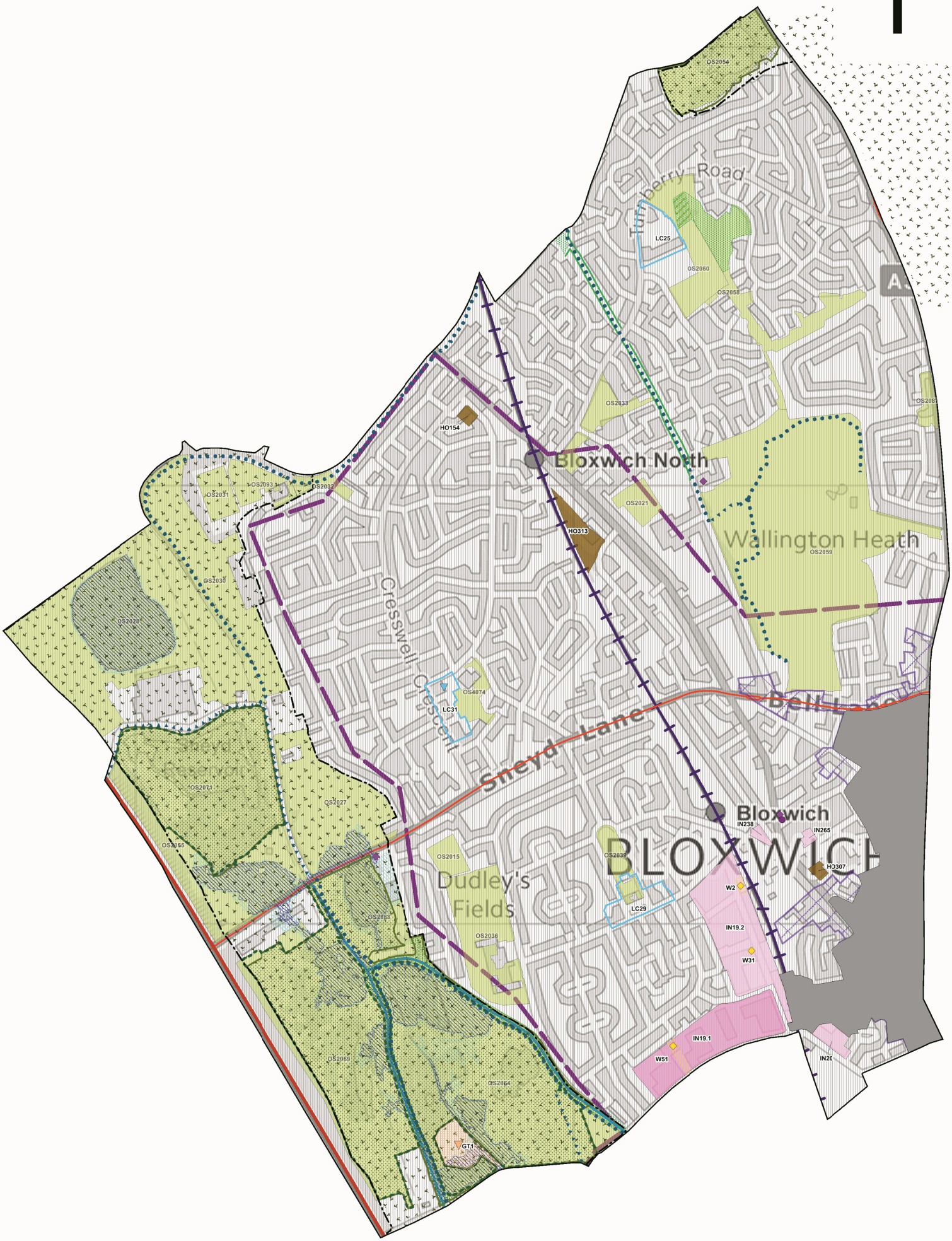


Bloxwich West

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