

Cabinet – 27 July 2011

Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge

Portfolio:	Councillor Anthony Harris, Leisure and culture
Service:	Leisure & Community Health – Green Space Services
Wards:	All
Key decision:	Yes
Forward plan:	Yes

1. Summary of report

- 1.1 This report outlines the intention of Greenspace Services to submit a number of greenspace sites to Fields in Trust (FIT) for potential dedication as Queen Elizabeth II Fields and requests cabinet's views on the potential sites that for submission. The report also outlines the implications of "protection in perpetuity", in particular the restrictions on the future use of these sites for alternative purposes.
- 1.2 The dedicating of sites presents an opportunity to safeguard community facilities that will not only benefit people today but also generations to follow.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That cabinet approve the submission of a number of sites to FIT for consideration as potential Queen Elizabeth II Fields.
- 2.2 That cabinet identifies which of the six suggested sites, one for each of the Area Partnerships, should be submitted to FIT for consideration.

3. Background information

- 3.1.1 FIT (formerly the National Playing Fields Association) has launched the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge and invited local authorities to nominate a number of outdoor recreational spaces in their area to become Queen Elizabeth II Fields. The outcome will be decided by public vote. The winning sites would be protected and designated Queen Elizabeth II Fields in perpetuity through deeds of dedication.
- 3.2 The initiative aims to protect outdoor recreational spaces and facilities and provide a focal point for celebrations in 2012, when the United Kingdom will be celebrating both the London Olympics and Her Majesty's diamond jubilee. FIT has identified a number of key benefits of dedication including:

- Making an express and recognisable commitment to local people to safeguard recreational land, facilities and opportunities, both now and forever.
- Protecting public access to outdoor space.
- Providing reassurance to potential investors regarding viability and sustainability.
- Raising awareness of the importance of such facilities in the context of quality of life, health, the environment and amenity.

3.3 Sites applicable for potential dedication must comply with the following criteria:

- The site must be owned by the organisation putting the field forward.
- Evidence of title must be provided.
- Each site's principal use should be outdoor sport, play or recreation.
- Generally the minimum size is 0.2 hectare (0.5 acre).
- Sites need to be accessible in terms of location.
- All sites will need local managers, who will be responsible for the quality of the facilities, their maintenance and development.

3.4 Any sites nominated by the Council will be put to a public vote through the FIT internet site allowing the general public to express their support for their favourite local field.

3.5 The parks and open spaces concerned would remain in council ownership and there would be no requirement for any actual name change for the sites involved.

3.6 The following sites are therefore suggested for consideration for nomination all of which are free from covenant, are freehold land and would meet the FIT criteria:

- **Appendix A** - Walsall Arboretum / Extension / Grange Playing Fields
- **Appendix B** - Doebank Park (Pheasey)
- **Appendix C** - Bradbury Park (Brownhills)
- **Appendix D** - Kingshill Park (Darlaston)
- **Appendix E** - Littleton Road Playing Field (New Invention)
- **Appendix F** - Odell Road Playing Field (Bloxwich)

4.0 Implications of Protection in Perpetuity

4.1 All of the proposed sites already hold a level of protection within planning policy either through inclusion in the Green Belt or designation as Open Space.

4.2 Protection "*in perpetuity*" will reduce flexibility over future decision making in relation to the individual sites. This could be in terms of exploring development potential or alternative use over the whole or part of the sites. Fields in Trust accepts that communities and land use can change over time. Therefore, in exceptional circumstances, parts of sites or, very rarely, whole sites can therefore be disposed of provided the disposal is of clear advantage and in the best interests of the community from a recreational perspective. The criteria which Fields in Trust applies to replacement facilities are that they should be of:

- At least equal size
- Better quality, serving the same community in terms of catchment area

Additionally, the entire proceeds of any disposal should normally be re-applied to new sport, recreation and/or play facilities with priority given to outdoor, prior to indoor, facilities.

- 4.3 It is important to clarify and confirm the exact site boundaries to establish the existing status of land parcels making up the individual sites and potential policy protection already afforded. Plans of each site are appended to this report.
- 4.4 The designation of protection in perpetuity will increase the likelihood of attracting much needed external funding which can be focused on supporting evidenced improvements to the designated site. This is particularly important and relevant for sites such as Littleton Road in New Invention and Odell Road in Bloxwich which score relatively low in terms of pitch quality and ancillary facilities.

5. Resource considerations

- 5.1 **Financial:** dedicating the site(s) will have no short term financial impacts. Site maintenance will continue to be met from within existing budgets of Green Spaces and Street Pride. It will however mean that a long term financial commitment will need to be made to continue to maintain the site(s) as accessible open space although the standards achieved will be subject to future financial reviews.
- 5.2 **Legal:** Once sites have been selected following the community voting process, each site will be the subject of a deed of dedication setting out the safeguarding of the site for the future.
- 5.3 **Staffing:** none

6. Citizen impact

The dedicating of sites presents an opportunity to safeguard community facilities that will not only benefit people today but also generations to follow, securing for communities access to outdoor spaces for sport, recreation and play. At a time when one in three children under 12 is overweight or obese, protecting and encouraging greater use of local parks and playing fields is vital.

7. Community safety

It is recognised that open spaces must be safe and secure places for all members of the community to use and all relevant safety issues must be addressed in management and maintenance plans and implemented on the ground. Concerns which arise will be addressed promptly with particular attention to equipment and facilities, security, anti-social behaviour, visibility of staff, dog fouling, litter, vandalism, health and safety policies and service standards.

8. Environmental impact

A household survey undertaken during the development of the Green Space Strategy has shown that parks and green spaces are the most valued leisure and cultural facilities in Walsall. They are well used by residents of the borough for informal recreation, sports or as venues for events and activities. The dedication of the site(s) will benefit local residents and park users and contribute to improving the quality of life in the borough of Walsall.

9. Performance and risk management issues

9.1 **Risk:** No identified risks

9.2 **Performance management:** Dedication of sites could potentially have positive long term impacts on performance indicators for quality of life, health of the community and citizen satisfaction.

10. Equality implications

Parks and open spaces play a key role in bringing people together on common ground. The sites can unite diverse communities through activities, education, celebrations, cultural events and engagement. The sites are open to all, regardless of ethnic origin, age or gender.

11. Consultation

The general public will have the opportunity to indicate the site(s) that they would like dedicating through www.qe2fields.com

Background papers

None

Author

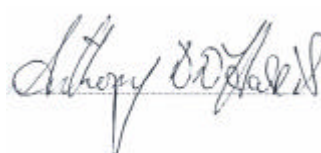
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Jamie Morris
Executive Director



15 July 2011

Councillor Anthony Harris
Portfolio Holder



15 July 2011



Walsall Council



ASSET MANAGEMENT
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Fax: 01922 636150

SITE ADDRESS:
LITTLETON ROAD PLAYING FIELDS
WILLENHALL

DRAWING NO: EPMS 3515/1
DATE : 15/07/2011
DRAWN BY : KCL



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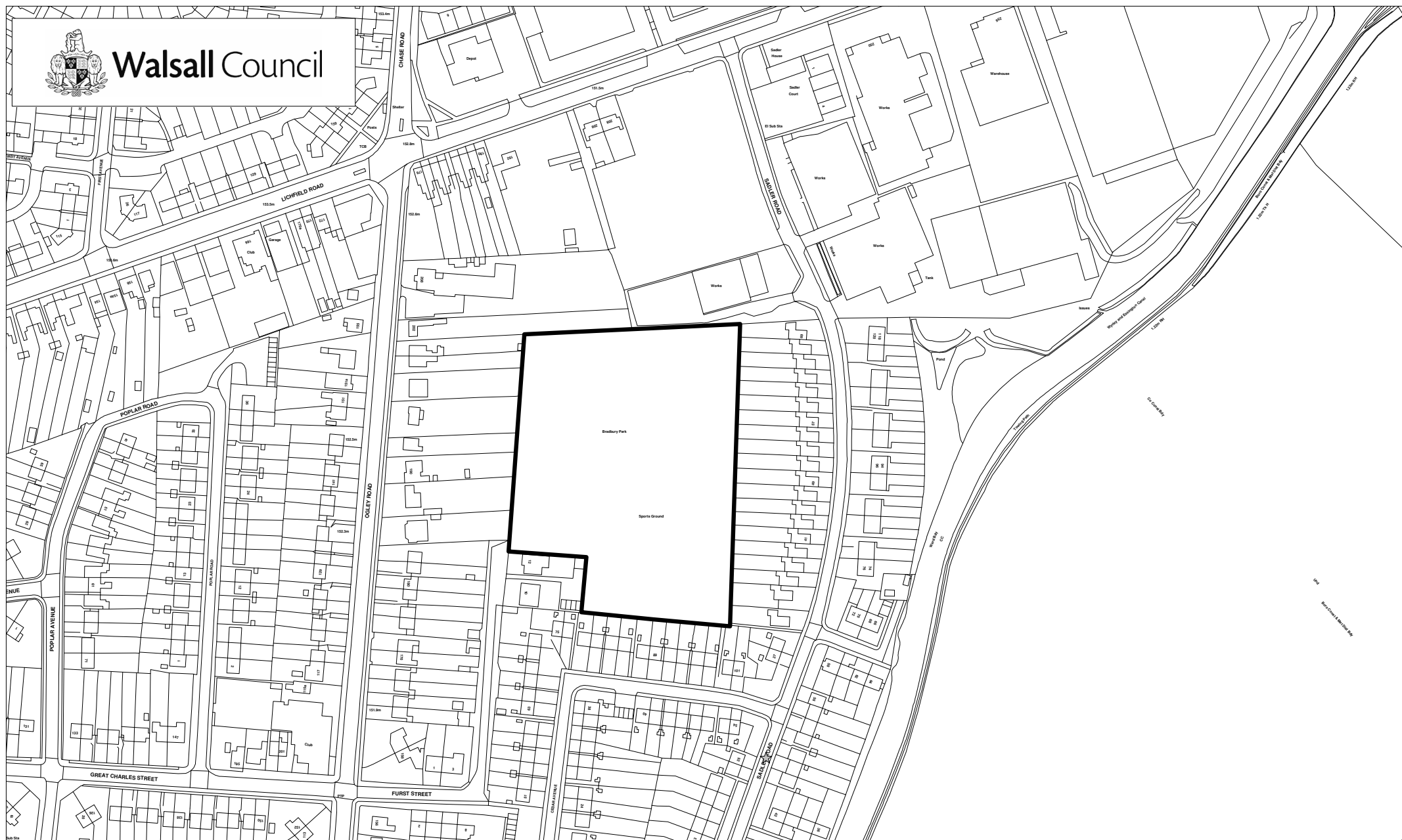
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APPENDIX E



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SITE ADDRESS:
BRADBURY PARK
BROWNHILLS

DRAWING NO: EPMS 3515/2
DATE : 15/07/2011
DRAWN BY : SSP



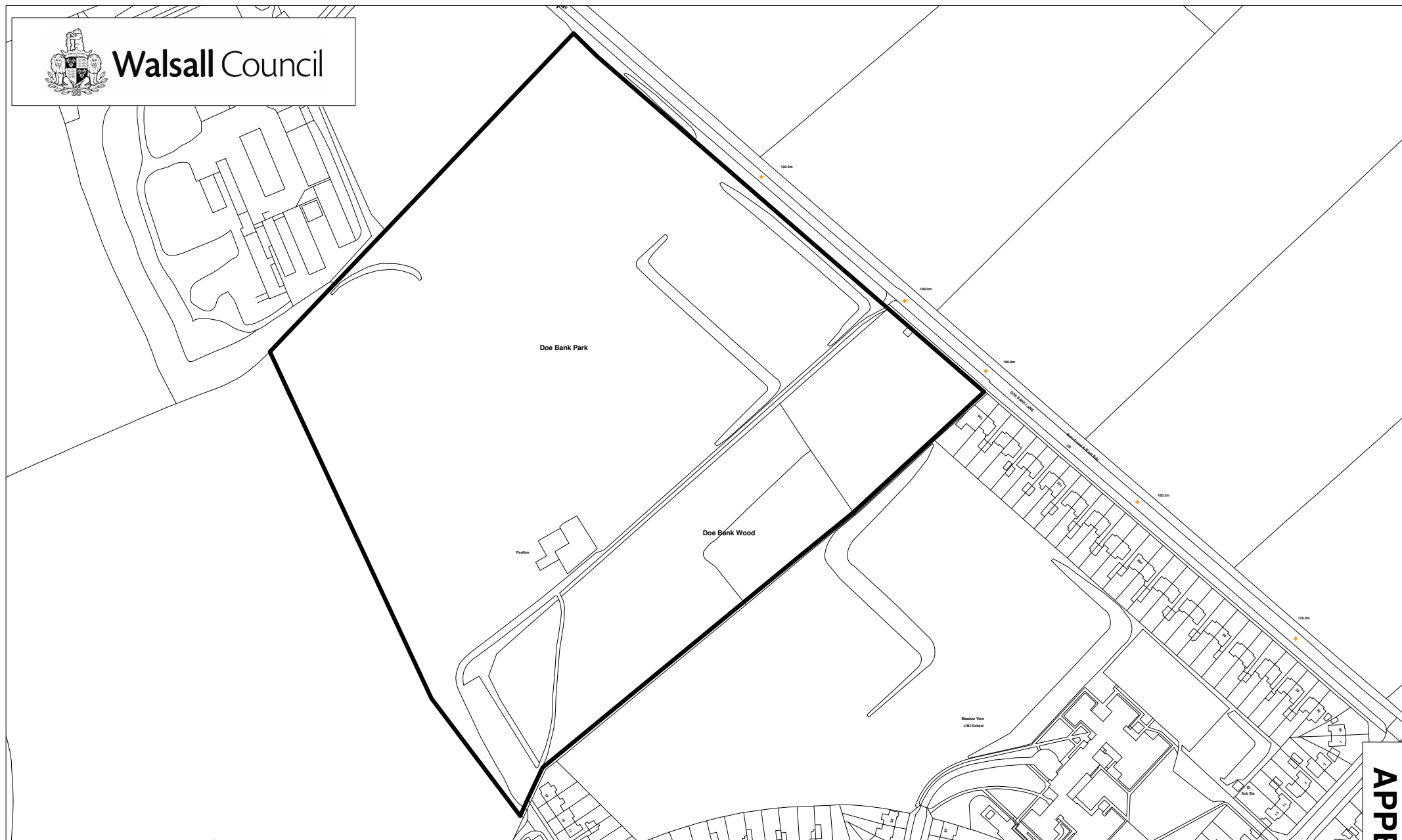
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SITE ADDRESS:
DOE BANK PARK
GREAT BARR

DRAWING NO: EPMS 3515/3
DATE : 15/07/2011
DRAWN BY : KCL



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APPENDIX B



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SITE ADDRESS:
KINGS HILL PARK
DARLASTON

DRAWING NO: EPMS 3515/4
DATE : 15/07/2011
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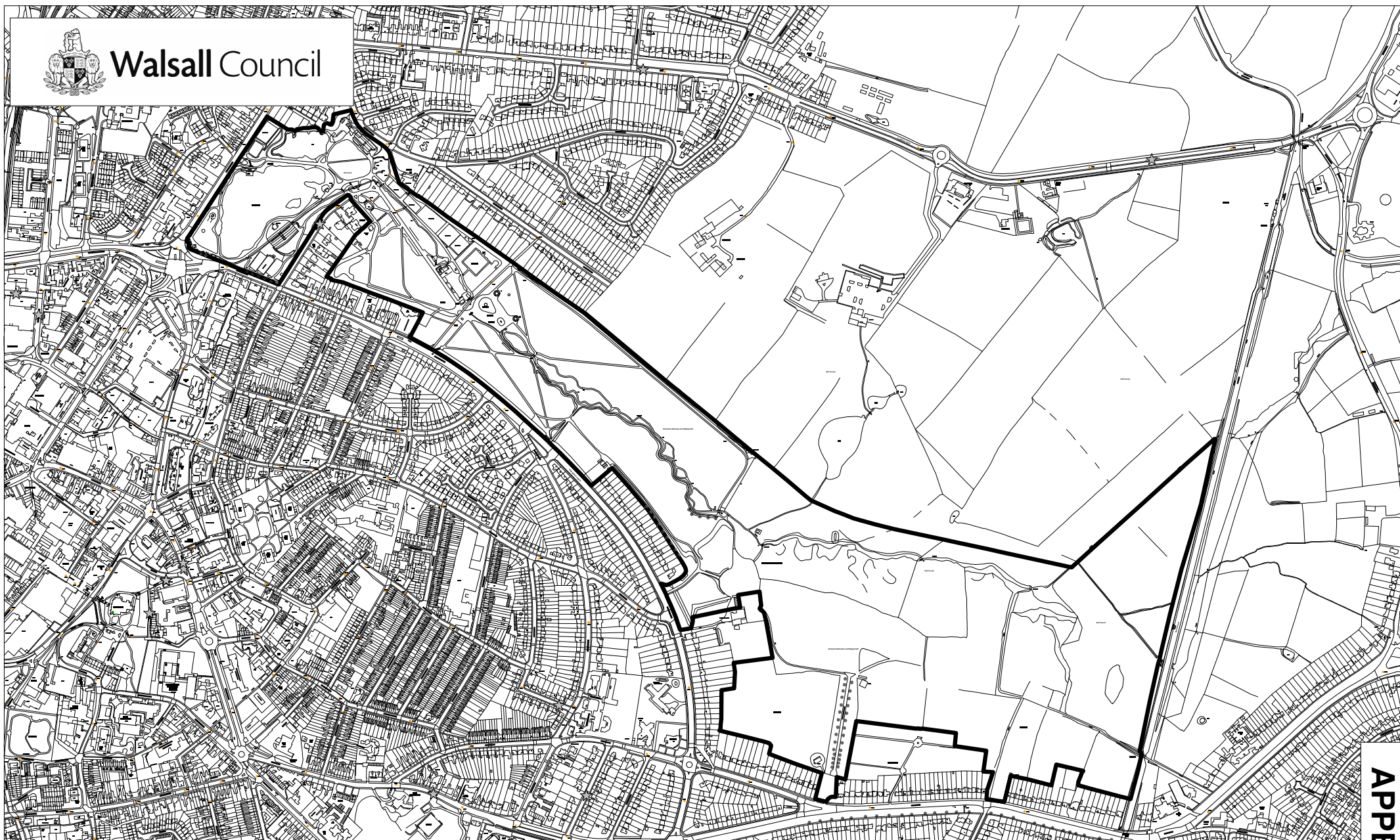


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SITE ADDRESS:
WALSALL ARBORETUM

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APPENDIX A



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ASSET MANAGEMENT
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SITE ADDRESS:
ODELL ROAD PLAYING FIELDS
WALSALL

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