

Cabinet

Updated – 12 October 2023

Wednesday 18 October 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

Meeting venue: Conference Room 2, Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall.

Livestream <http://www.WalsallCouncilWebcasts.com>

Portfolios

Councillor M.A. Bird,
Leader of the Council



Councillor G. Perry,
Deputy Leader
Resilient Communities



Councillor A. Andrew,
Deputy Leader and
Regeneration



Councillor K. Ferguson,
Internal Services



Councillor K. Pedley,
Adult Social Care



Councillor G. Flint,
Wellbeing, Leisure and
Public Spaces



Councillor S. Elson,
Children's



Councillor M. Statham,
Education and Skills



Councillor K. Murphy,
Street Pride



Councillor G. Ali,
Customer



Quorum 3 members

Democratic Services, The Council House, Walsall, WS1 1TW

Contact name: **Craig Goodall** ☎ (01922) 65 ✉ craig.goodall@walsall.gov.uk

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The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012

Specified pecuniary interests

The pecuniary interests which are specified for the purposes of Chapter 7 of Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 are the interests specified in the second column of the following:

Subject	Prescribed description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	<p>Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by a member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of a member.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Regulations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p>
Contracts	<p>Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority:</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	<p>Any tenancy where (to a member's knowledge):</p> <p>(a) the landlord is the relevant authority;</p> <p>(b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.</p>
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where:</p> <p>(a) that body (to a member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and</p> <p>(b) either:</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(ii) if the share capital of that body is more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</p>

Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)

Access to information: Exempt information

Part 1

Descriptions of exempt information: England

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes:
 - (a) to give any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.
8. Information being disclosed during a meeting of a Scrutiny and Performance Panel when considering flood risk management functions which:
 - (a) Constitutes a trades secret;
 - (b) Its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the risk management authority);
 - (c) It was obtained by a risk management authority from any other person and its disclosure to the public by the risk management authority would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that other person.

Part I – Public session

1. Apologies
2. Minutes – a. 19 July 2023 **Enclosed**
b. 20 September 2023 (Special Meeting) **Enclosed**
3. Declarations of interest
4. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended):**

To agree that the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of the agenda items indicated for the reasons shown on the agenda.
5. **Petitions.**

(Note: For advice on how to submit petitions, contact Democratic Services. Contact details on the front page of the agenda).
6. **Questions**

(30 minutes will be allowed for pre-submitted questions from non-executive members and the public. All questions will have been submitted at least 7 clear days before the meeting. Answers will be provided at the meeting - no supplementary questions will be allowed.)
7. Forward plan **Enclosed**

Leader of the Council: Councillor Bird

Non-Key Decisions

8. Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28 **Enclosed**
9. Corporate Financial Performance 2023/24 – Mid-year position **Enclosed**
10. Council Plan: Markers of Success Q1 23/24 **Enclosed**
11. The Armed Forces Act 2021 – New Statutory Duty: Walsall Armed Forces Covenant 2023 **Enclosed**

Deputy Leader and Regeneration: Councillor Andrew

Key Decision

12. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) **Enclosed**
13. Willenhall Framework Plan: Phase 1 Developer Partner Procurement Outcome and Award **Enclosed**

14. Future provision of street lighting services **Enclosed**

Deputy Leader and Resilient Communities: Councillor Perry

Non-key Decision

15. Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2023/24 **Enclosed**

Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Wellbeing and Healthy Spaces: Councillor Flint

Key Decision

16. Integrated sexual and reproductive health services and the Healthy Child Programme 0-19 Section 75 Agreement Extensions **Enclosed**

Portfolio Holder for Street Pride: Councillor Murphy

Key Decision

17. Winter Service Operational Plan 2023-28 **Enclosed**

Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills: Councillor M. Statham

Key Decision

18. Proposed Early Years Supplementary Grant (EYSG) for two, three & four years olds - 2023/24 **Enclosed**

19. Proposed Schools Local Funding Formula 2024/25 **Enclosed**

Feedback from Overview and Scrutiny

Non-key Decision

20. Recommendations from Education Scrutiny Committee regarding Children Not in School, exclusions and suspensions and support for children in Elective Home Education. **Enclosed**

Part II – Private Session

Deputy Leader and Regeneration: Councillor Andrew

Key Decision

21. Willenhall Framework Plan: Phase 1 Developer Partner Procurement Outcome and Award **Enclosed**

22. Sale of the Former Allens Centre, Hilton Road, Willenhall **Enclosed**

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Cabinet

Wednesday 19 July 2023

Minutes of the meeting held in Conference Room 2 at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall at 6pm.

Present

Councillor Bird (Chair)	Leader of the Council
Councillor Ali	Customer
Councillor Andrew	Deputy Leader and Regeneration
Councillor Elson	Children's Services
Councillor Ferguson	Internal Services
Councillor Flint	Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Murphy	Clean and Green
Councillor Pedley	Adult Social Care
Councillor Perry	Deputy Leader and Resilient Communities
Councillor M. Statham	Education and Skills

In attendance – in person

S. Rowe, Executive Director – Children's Services
K. Allward, Executive Director - Adult Social Care and Hub
D. Brown, Interim Executive Director – Economy, Environment and Communities
S. Darcy, Director – Finance, Corporate Performance Management and Corporate Landlord
D. Moore, Interim Director, Regeneration and Economy
S. Portman, Head of Law
C. Goodall, Principal Democratic Services Officer
E. Cook, Assistant Democratic Services Officer

In attendance – remote

S. Gunther, Director of Public Health

Part 1 – Public Session

4102 Welcome

Councillor Bird opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and explaining that the Cabinet was meeting that evening in person and that the agenda and reports for this meeting were available on the Council's website. He explained that voting would be by way of a show of hands which would be witnessed and recorded by the Democratic Services officer in attendance.

4103 Apologies

No apologies were received.

4104 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 21 June 2023 were submitted.

Resolved

That the minutes of 21 June 2023, a copy having been sent to each member of the Cabinet, be approved and signed as a correct record.

4105 **Declarations of interest**

Councillor Flint declared an interest relating to agenda item 11 'Proposal for Household Support Fund 2023/24 and Revised Local Welfare Provision Policy'.

4106 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985**

Resolved

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items set out in the private part of the agenda for the reasons set out therein and Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972.

4107 **Petitions**

No petitions were submitted.

4108 **Questions**

No questions were received.

4109 **Forward plan**

The forward plan as of July 2023 was submitted:

(annexed)

Resolved (by assent)

That the forward plan be noted.

4110 **Corporate Financial Performance 2023/24, approach to Budget Setting for 2024/25, and changes to the council's Tax Strategy**

Councillor Bird introduced a report which provided an update on the forecast corporate financial position for 2023/24 and the approach for the 2024/25 budget process.

[Annexed]

It was **moved** by Councillor Bird and **seconded** by Councillor Andrew and it was;

Resolved (unanimously)

That Cabinet:

- 1. Note potential forecast revenue spend above budget of £13.79m and that further actions were being taken to address this potential position. A detailed plan would be reported to Cabinet in September, outlining actions to be taken.**
- 2. Note that there were additionally high risks of £20.05m to the revenue forecast identified within services as set out in Appendix 1. These risks were actively being monitored and action is being taken to reduce / eliminate them where possible.**
- 3. Note the progress on savings approved for 2023/24 and the amendments as detailed in section 4.14 to 4.16.**
- 4. Approve the passporting of unringfenced Section 31 funding for Early Years Professional Development Programme grant, Leaving Care Allowance Uplift Implementation grant, Supported Accommodation reforms, and Pupil Premium Plus Post 16 funding, to Children's Services as detailed at section 4.17 to 4.20 respectively.**
- 5. Approve that the Willenhall bonfire and fireworks event for 2023 was no longer provided as set out in section 4.21.**
- 6. Approve amendments to the capital programme as set out in section 4.23, including the rephasing of capital programme expenditure provision over the period to 2026/27 at Appendix 6.**
- 7. Note that the forecast for the capital programme was a predicted underspend of £720k.**
- 8. Note financial health indicator performance as set out in section 4.27 and Appendix 4.**
- 9. Note the prudential indicators as set out in section 4.33 and Appendix 5.**
- 10. Approve the write off of debt as detailed in section 4.36.**
- 11. Note the work underway to update to the medium term financial outlook and approve the approach for setting the 2024/25 budget, as set out in sections 4.37 to 4.47, aligned to the Council Plan, Budget Framework and Proud Promises.**
- 12. Approve the updated Medium Term Financial Framework as set out in section 4.48.**

Councillor Bird introduced a report which provided an update on the Quarter 4 markers of success of the Council Plan.

[Annexed]

It was **moved** by Councillor Bird and **seconded** by Councillor Andrew and it was;

Resolved (unanimously)

That Cabinet noted:

1. The performance in Q4 relating to the period January-March 2023.
2. The key achievements, identified interdependencies and support required to achieve the Outcomes, set out in the report.

4112 **Willenhall Framework Plan: Phase 1 Moat Street and Villiers Street project update and strategic land acquisition (use of the Council's compulsory purchase powers)**

Councillor Andrew introduced a report setting out Phase 1 of the Willenhall Framework Plan which aims to stimulate the regeneration of Willenhall.

[Annexed]

It was **moved** by Councillor Andrew and **seconded** by Councillor Bird and it was;

Resolved (unanimously)

That:

1. Cabinet note the progress made to develop the Phase 1 scheme.
2. Cabinet authorise use of the compulsory purchase powers conferred on the Council by section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to acquire land and rights within the areas shown on the plan at Appendix C ("Order Land") necessary to deliver the Moat Street and Villiers Street scheme.
3. That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Resources and Transformation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, to effect the making, confirmation, and implementation of the Order and to take all necessary steps to give effect to the Order in respect of the Order Land including, but not limited to, the following procedural steps:
 - I. finalise the Statement of Reasons setting out the Council's reasons for making the Order and how this accords with Government Guidance on CPO;

- II. making the CPO, the publication and service of any press, site and individual notices and other correspondence for such making;
 - III. acquire all interests within the Order Land as may be necessary to facilitate the scheme, either by agreement or compulsorily, including entering into negotiations with any third parties for the acquisition of their land interests;
 - IV. the payment of compensation and dealing with any blight notices served in connection with the CPO;
 - V. approve agreements with landowners or statutory undertakers as applicable, setting out the terms for withdrawal of any objections to the CPO, including where appropriate seeking exclusion of land from the CPO;
 - VI. make any necessary additions, deletions, or amendments to the Order Land and to seek any requisite modifications to the CPO and any Order maps (as may be considered necessary);
 - VII. the preparation and presentation of the Council's case at any Public Inquiry which may be necessary;
 - VIII. seek confirmation of the Order by the Secretary of State (or, if permitted, by the Council pursuant to Section 14A of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981) (the 1981 Act);
 - IX. in the event the order is confirmed, publication and service of notices of confirmation of the Order and thereafter to execute and serve any general vesting declarations and/or notices to treat and notices of entry, and any other notices or correspondence to acquire those interests within the area;
 - X. including, if required, High Court Enforcement Officer notices; and
 - XI. all steps in any legal proceedings related to the Order including referral and conduct of disputes, relating to compulsory purchase compensation, to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) and/or the courts and any appeals.
4. Cabinet note that reasonable attempts would continue to be made to acquire the various land interests of owners, occupiers, or others with a legal interest in any site by agreement throughout the process.
 5. Cabinet note that it was no longer proposed to develop the Willenhall Framework Plan into a Supplementary Planning Document.
 6. Cabinet note the amendments to the boundary for Phase 1 (Moat Street and Villiers Street) for the purpose of land assembly and planning.
 7. Cabinet note the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) that has been prepared which is included as Appendix E and that this document will be reviewed and updated as necessary.

Having declared an interest in the next item, Councillor Flint left the room at this point.

4113 **Proposal for Household Support Fund 2023/24 and Revised Local Welfare Provision Policy**

Councillor Ali introduced a report which sought approval to accept the latest award of Household Support Funding from central government and to facilitate distribution of these funds.

[Annexed]

It was **moved** by Councillor Ali and **seconded** by Councillor Bird and it was;

Resolved (unanimously)

That:

1. **Cabinet approve for the Director of Customer Engagement to accept the Household Support Funding award from the central government, and any future rounds of funding, and to oversee distribution of funds in accordance with the Walsall Local Welfare Provision Scheme.**
2. **Cabinet approve the Walsall Local Welfare Provision Scheme as set out at Appendix A which will replaces the Walsall Councils Crisis Support policy.**
3. **Authority was delegate to the Director of Customer Engagement in consultation with the Deputy Leader (Resilient Communities) and the Portfolio Holder for Customer to make minor amendments to the Walsall Local Welfare Provision Scheme, to take account of changes to market conditions, funding arrangements, updated government guidance, future consultation or outputs from relevant Equality Impact Assessments.**
4. **Authority was delegate to the Director of Customer Engagement in consultation with the Deputy Leader (Resilient Communities) and the Portfolio Holder for Customer and the procurement team, to enter into agreements with the third-party providers, where their services are necessary to support the timely distribution of essential crisis support in accordance with the updated Walsall Local Welfare Provision Scheme (attached as Appendix A)**

Councillor Flint returned to the room following the conclusion of the agenda item.

4114 **Award of Walsall Wellbeing Service Contract Award**

Councillor Flint introduced a report seeking approval for the award of a contract for provision of Walsall's Wellbeing Service.

[Annexed]

A decision was taken in the private session following consideration of exempt information (see minute number 4116).

4115 Exclusion of public

Resolved

That during consideration of the remaining items on the agenda, the Cabinet considers that the items for consideration are exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972, and accordingly resolves to consider the items in private.

Whilst the following items were considered the private session, the decisions below are full accounts of the decisions taken.

4116 Award of Walsall Wellbeing Service Contract Award

Councillor Flint introduced a report which provided exempt information further to the report provided in the public session (see minute 4114).

It was **moved** by Councillor Flint and **seconded** by Councillor Bird and it was

Resolved (unanimously)

That

- 1. Cabinet approve the award of a contract for the period 1st November 2023 to 31st October 2028, with an option to extend for a further two 12 month periods, with an anticipated value in the region of £5,830,818 (including extension periods) to Maximus UK Services Limited, for provision of the Walsall Wellbeing Service.**
- 2. That Cabinet delegate authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing, Leisure and Public Spaces, to enter into a contract to deliver the Wellbeing Service, and to subsequently authorise the sealing and signing of any deeds, contracts or other related documents for such services.**
- 3. That Cabinet delegate authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing, Leisure and Public Spaces, to authorise any variations to the contractual arrangements or other related documents for the services identified above, should this be required throughout the duration of the term of any contracts and provided they are in line with the Council's Contract Rules and any relevant legislation, including Public Contract Regulations 2015.**

(Exempt Information under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended)

4117 To receive recommendations from the Scrutiny Overview Committee regarding the call-in of the Temporary Workers (Agency) Provision Cabinet decision

Councillor Ferguson introduced a report which provided recommendations from the Scrutiny Overview Committee regarding the all-in of the Temporary Works (Agency) Provision decision taken by Cabinet in June 2023.

It was **moved** by Councillor Ferguson and **seconded** by Councillor Bird and it was;

Resolved (unanimously)

That Cabinet accepted the recommendations of the Scrutiny Overview Committee and that:

- 1. Cabinet delegate authority to the Director for HR, OD, Administration and Business Support, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Internal Services, to take steps to implement the recommendations relating to Temporary Workers (Agency) provision locally.**
- 2. Cabinet note that third party spend and the performance management of contracts was being taken forward within the Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management team within the Hub, aligned with Commercial Services support.**

(Exempt Information under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended)

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 6:27 p.m.

Chair:

Date:

Cabinet

Wednesday 20 September 2023 (Special Meeting)

Minutes of the meeting held in Conference Room 2 at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall at 6pm.

Present

Councillor Bird (Chair)	Leader of the Council
Councillor Ali	Customer
Councillor Elson	Children's Services
Councillor Ferguson	Internal Services
Councillor Flint	Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Pedley	Adult Social Care
Councillor M. Statham	Education and Skills

In attendance

C. Male, Interim Executive Director – Children's Services and Customer
K. Allward, Executive Director - Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub
D. Brown, Interim Executive Director – Economy, Environment and Communities
J. Greenhalgh, Interim Executive Director, Resources
S. Darcy, Director – Finance, Corporate Performance Management and Corporate Landlord
N. Inglis, Interim Director of Public Health
S. Portman, Head of Law
C. Goodall, Principal Democratic Services Officer
E. Cook, Democratic Services Officer

Part 1 – Public Session

4119 Welcome

Councillor Bird opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and explaining that the Cabinet was meeting that evening in person and that the agenda and reports for the meeting were available on the Council's website. He explained that voting would be by way of a show of hands which would be witnessed and recorded by the Democratic Services officer in attendance.

4120 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Andrew, Councillor Murphy and Councillor Perry.

4121 Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were received.

4122 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985**

Resolved

There were no items for consideration in the private session.

4123 **Approval of the West Midlands Combined Authority West Midlands Trailblazer Deeper Devolution Deal and Implementation Plan**

Councillor Bird introduced the report which set out the proposed new West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) devolution deal and implementation plan.

(annexed)

It was **moved** by Councillor Bird and **seconded** by Councillor Statham and upon being put to the vote it was;

Resolved (unanimously)

That Cabinet :

1. Endorse the West Midlands deeper devolution deal and implementation plan (Appendix 1 and 2).
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to take part in the continuous negotiations that form part of the evolution and development of the West Midlands deeper devolution deal and implementation plan, and to agree the order and other documentation required to implement the deal.
3. Note that a further report may be brought before Cabinet in the event of any material or significant changes as a result of the ongoing negotiations.

4124 **West Midlands Combined Authority West Midlands Trailblazer Deeper Devolution Deal 100% Business Rates Retention**

Councillor Bird introduced the report which set out the key terms agreed with government relating to the opportunity to retain 100% of Business Rates.

(annexed)

It was **moved** by Councillor Bird and **seconded** by Councillor Flint and upon being put to the vote it was;

Resolved (unanimously)

That:

1. Cabinet note the performance to date of the West Midlands 100% Business Rates Retention Pilot.
2. Cabinet agree to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (Appendix A) with Government regarding the offer of 10 year, 100% Business Rate

Retention for the West Midlands, in accordance with the Trailblazing Devolution Deal.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 6:06 p.m.

Chair:

Date:



FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

**Council House,
Lichfield Street,
Walsall, WS1 1TW**
www.walsall.gov.uk

4 September 2023

FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan sets out decisions that are termed as “key decisions” at least 28 calendar days before they are due to be taken by the Executive (Cabinet). Also included on the plan are other decisions to be taken by the Cabinet (“non-key decisions”). Preparation of the forward plan helps the Council to programme its work. The purpose of the forward plan is to give plenty of notice and an opportunity for consultation on the issues to be discussed. The plan is updated each month with the period of the plan being rolled forward by one month and republished. Copies of the plan can be obtained from Democratic Services, Walsall MBC, Council House, Walsall, WS1 1TW craig.goodall@walsall.gov.uk and can also be accessed from the Council’s website at www.walsall.gov.uk. The Cabinet is allowed to make urgent decisions which do not appear in the forward plan, however, a notice will be included on the agenda for the relevant Cabinet meeting which explains the reasons why.

Please note that the decision dates are indicative and are subject to change. Please contact the above addressee if you wish to check the date for a particular item.

The Cabinet agenda and reports are available for inspection by the public 7 days prior to the meeting of the Cabinet on the Council’s website. Background papers are listed on each report submitted to the Cabinet and members of the public are entitled to see these documents unless they are confidential. The report also contains the name and telephone number of a contact officer. These details can also be found in the forward plan.

Meetings of the Cabinet are open to the public. Occasionally there are items included on the agenda which are confidential and for those items the public will be asked to leave the meeting. The forward plan will show where this is intended and the reason why the reports are confidential. Enquiries regarding these reasons should be directed to Democratic Services (craig.goodall@walsall.gov.uk).

“Key decisions” are those decisions which have a significant effect within the community or which involve considerable expenditure or savings. With regard to key decisions the Council’s Constitution states:

- (1) A key decision is:
 - (i) any decision in relation to an executive function which results in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant, having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or function to which the decision relates or
 - (ii) any decision that is likely to have significant impact on two or more wards within the borough.
- (2) The threshold for “significant” expenditure/savings is £500,000.
- (3) A decision taker may only make a key decision in accordance with the requirements of the Executive Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of this Constitution.

**FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS
OCTOBER 2023 TO JANUARY 2024 (04.09.2023)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reference No./ Date first entered in Plan	Decision to be considered (to provide adequate details for those both in and outside the Council)	Decision maker	Background papers (if any) and Contact Officer	Main consultees	Contact Member (All Members can be written to at Civic Centre, Walsall)	Date item to be considered
31/23 (3.7.23)	Deeper Devolution Deal Approval of the West Midlands Combined Authority West Midlands Trailblazer Deeper Devolution Deal and Action Plan.	Cabinet Key Decision	Caroline Harper, Regeneration Officer Caroline.Harper@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Bird	20 September 2023
26/23 (5.6.23)	Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28 To provide an updated medium term financial outlook, draft revenue budget and capital programme for 2024/25 to 2027/28, including savings proposals, and to set out the process and timescales for setting a legally balanced budget for 2024/25.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Vicky Buckley Vicky.Buckley@walsall.gov.uk	Rate payers, voluntary and community organisations, Internal Services	Cllr Bird	18 October 2023
32/23 (3.7.23)	Council Plan 2022/25 – Q1 23/24 To note the Quarter 1 2023/24 (outturn) performance against the Markers of Success in the Council Plan 2022/25	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Elizabeth Connolly Elizabeth.Connolly@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Bird	18 October 2023
27/23 (5.6.23)	Corporate Financial Performance 2023/24	Cabinet	Vicky Buckley	Internal Services	Cllr Bird	18 October 2023

	To report the financial position based on 6 months to September 2023.	Non-key Decision	Vicky.Buckley@walsall.gov.uk			
40/23 (4.9.23)	Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) To seek approval for the adoption and publication of guidance on BNG, the publication of the Black Country Local Nature Recovery Map and Strategy, and its use as a working document	Cabinet Key Decision	The Black Country Local Nature Recovery Map and Strategy Sammy Pritchard Sammy.Pritchard@walsall.gov.uk David Holloway David.Holloway@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	18 October 2023
41/23 (4.9.23)	Willenhall Framework Plan: Phase 1 Developer Partner Procurement Outcome and Award To provide an update on the outcome of the developer partner procurement <i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>	Cabinet Key Decision	Kauser Agha Kauser.Agha@walsall.gov.uk	Internal services, Legal (external)	Cllr Andrew	18 October 2023
42/23 (4.9.23)	Sale of the Former Allens Centre, Hilton Road, Willenhall To seek approval for the sale of the former Allens Centre in Willenhall. <i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>	Cabinet Key Decision	Nick Ford Nick.Ford@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	18 October 2023

36/23 (7.8.23)	<p>Healthy Eating for Children and Young People Programme</p> <p>To seek approval to procure a new healthy eating and weight management programme for children and young people in Walsall.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	<p>Esther Higdon</p> <p>Esther.Higdon@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal Services</p> <p>Walsall Healthcare Trust</p>	Cllr Flint	18 October 2023
43/23 (4.9.23)	<p>Integrated sexual and reproductive health services and the Healthy Child Programme 0-19 Section 75 Agreement Extensions</p> <p>To seek approval for the extension of the Section 75 agreement for the delivery of integrated sexual and reproductive health services and the Healthy Child Programme 0-19.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	<p>Esther Higdon</p> <p>Esther.Higdon@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal Services</p> <p>Walsall Healthcare Trust</p>	Cllr Flint	18 October 2023
33/23 (3.7.23)	<p>Winter Service Operational Plan 2023- 2028</p> <p>To approve the winter service operational plan.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	<p>Paul Leighton</p> <p>Paul.Leighton@walsall.gov.uk</p> <p>Graham Wallis</p> <p>Graham.Wallis@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal Services</p>	Cllr Murphy	18 October 2023
44/23 (4.9.23)	<p>Street Lighting Post-PFI Arrangements</p> <p>To approve the service delivery model for the street lighting service from April 2028.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	<p>Katie Moreton</p> <p>Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal Services</p>	Cllr Murphy	18 October 2023

45/23 (4.9.23)	<p>Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2023/24</p> <p>The Food Standards Agency (FSA) requires all local authorities to prepare an annual service delivery plan to reflect the work required of food authorities by the FSA, under the requirements of the Food Standards Act 1999 and the framework agreement on local authority enforcement. In accordance with this requirement a Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2023/24 has been prepared and a decision is required from members to obtain authority to approve this plan.</p>	Cabinet Council Non-key Decision	Paul Rooney Paul.Rooney@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Perry	Cabinet 18 October 2023 Council 6 November 2023
34/23 (3.7.23)	<p>Early Years Funding Formula 2023/24:</p> <p>That Cabinet approves changes to the Early Years Funding Formula for 2023/24 following notification of an increase in the hourly funding rates.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	ESFA – Early Years funding operational guide Richard Walley Richard.Walley@walsall.gov.uk	Schools Forum Internal Services	Cllr Statham	18 October 2023
35/23 (3.7.23)	<p>Schools Mainstream Local Funding Formula 2024/25:</p> <p>That Cabinet approves the Mainstream Local Funding Formula, to be used for the allocation of mainstream funding to schools in Walsall.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	ESFA – Schools revenue funding operation guide Richard Walley Richard.walley@walsall.gov.uk	Schools Forum Internal Services	Cllr Statham	18 October 2023
46/23 (4.9.23)	<p>SEN Place Requirement</p> <p>To approve finance for additional special educational needs school places.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	Alex Groom Alex.Groom@walsall.gov.uk	Internal services	Cllr Statham	18 October 2023

37/23 (7.8.23)	<p>Autumn Budget and Spending Review, and feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees on draft revenue and capital budget proposals 2024/25 to 2027/28</p> <p>To provide an update on the impact of the Autumn Budget and Spending Review on the medium-term financial outlook, and to consider feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees on the draft revenue and capital budget.</p>	<p>Cabinet Non-key Decision</p>	<p>Vicky Buckley Vicky.Buckley@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Council tax payers, business rate payers, voluntary and community organisations. Internal services</p>	<p>Cllr Bird</p>	<p>13 December 2023</p>
38/23 (7.8.23)	<p>Treasury Management Mid Year Position Statement 2023/24</p> <p>To note and forward to Council, for consideration and noting (and in line with the requirements of the Treasury Management Code of Practice (2017), the mid year report for treasury management activities 2023/24 including prudential and local indicators.</p>	<p>Council Non-key Decision</p>	<p>Treasury Management Code of Practice. Richard Walley Richard.Walley@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal services</p>	<p>Cllr Ferguson</p>	<p>13 December 2023</p>
39/23 (7.8.23)	<p>Strategic Leisure Review</p> <p>To update on the performance and impact of the four leisure facilities. To approve recommendations around the current and future facility stock.</p>	<p>Cabinet Key Decision</p>	<p>Stuart Webb Stuart.Webb@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal services</p>	<p>Cllr Flint</p>	<p>13 December 2023</p>
14/23 (6.2.23)	<p>Growth Funding for Schools:</p> <p>To enable the Local Authority to fulfil its duty to secure sufficient primary and secondary school places, through the</p>	<p>Cabinet Key Decision</p>	<p>Alex Groom Alex.Groom@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal services, Schools Forum</p>	<p>Cllr Statham</p>	<p>13 December 2023</p>

	adoption of a policy for the application of revenue funding for school growth.					
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Cabinet – 18 October 2023

Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2024/25 – 2027/28

Portfolio:	Councillor M. Bird – Leader of the Council (Lead Portfolio)
Related Portfolios:	All
Service:	Finance – council wide
Wards:	All
Key decision:	No
Forward plan:	Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To provide an updated medium term financial outlook, first draft revenue budget (including savings proposals for consultation) and draft capital programme for 2024/25 to 2027/28 and set out the process and timescale for setting a balanced budget for 2024/25.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The 2023/24 budget was approved by Council on 23 February 2023, and is monitored and reported to Cabinet throughout the year to address any delivery issues and manage key risks and pressures as they arise. 2023/24 has been another challenging year with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the impact of rising demand on council services. Emerging service pressures have required action to be taken to limit the council's financial exposure. These actions aim to ensure that the budget is balanced at year-end, with a sufficient level of reserves to manage existing liabilities and any potential new risks which may arise in 2024/25. Where pressures continue into 2024/25, they are incorporated into this report.
- 2.2 The report covers the four-year period 2024/25 to 2027/28, including:
 - An update on the Medium-Term Financial Outlook (MTFO), based on known pressures and estimated assumptions for 2024/25 to 2027/28.
 - Draft Proud savings proposals identified to date for 2024/25 and draft savings in relation to 2025/26 to 2027/28.
 - A draft capital programme for 2024/25 to 2027/28.
 - The timeline for the setting of the revenue budget and capital programme, including stakeholder consultation and equality impact assessments (where required).
- 2.3 The Council continues to be impacted by the ongoing challenge imposed by unprecedented cost of living increases - felt on services and the council's finances, including the impact on costs - pay, contracts, energy, and fuel in particular - and income

levels and some delays to delivery of approved budget savings. Any known on-going financial impact arising in 2023/24 has been addressed in year or as part of this budget cycle. Our MTFO has been updated for all known pressures, including best professional assumptions around the cost-of-living impact, and that on rising demand on our services. Due to the size and breadth of cost pressures, this has had a significant impact on the assumptions in relation to the 2024/25 budget, with additional growth now required of c£57.69m, resulting in a budget gap of c£18.06m.

- 2.4 The Council is legally obliged to set a one-year balanced budget (2024/25), however a medium-term approach is beneficial to allow for sound financial planning and to support future financial stability. The proposals set out in this report do not yet balance the budget for 2024/25, so there will be a requirement to report back on changes and options to close the gap at the next meeting of Cabinet on 13 December 2023. All draft proposals are subject to changes arising from the Autumn Statement due on 22 November 2023, and a provisional settlement yet to be received (anticipated mid December). A number of savings proposals are also included for 2025/26 to 2027/28, with further options being identified to allow for a balanced budget over the period 2025/26 to 2027/28 aligned to the Council Plan and Proud activity.
- 2.5 The 2024/25 draft budget assumes a 2.99% general council tax increase and a further 2% precept for Adult Social Care in line with current referendum assumptions, with a 1.99% per annum increase thereafter. This is expected to be confirmed when we receive our draft 2024/25 settlement in December 2023.
- 2.6 To ensure the budget process and delivery of savings is informed by a clear purpose and key council priorities, the Council Plan and Proud objectives continue to be used to shape service delivery proposals through Proud service transformation plans.
- 2.7 The draft capital programme for 2024/25 totals £132.08m. It sets out capital investment funded from the council's own resources of £75.23m (funded by capital receipts and borrowing) and externally funded schemes of £56.85m (funded by capital grants) and represents a balanced programme for 2024/25. In addition, the report sets out a further three years of indicative proposals to 2027/28. Despite reductions in capital funding in recent years and going forward, the draft capital programme contains significant investment into regeneration initiatives, highways, education, and into adult and children's social care and housing to support vulnerable households through Health through Warmth and provision of aids and adaptations.
- 2.8 The council's Medium Term Financial Framework (MTFF), reviewed regularly by Cabinet, is the framework within which the council's financial planning and management is undertaken and its budget set. The main objectives of the Framework are to set out how the council will structure and manage its finances now and in the future, and to ensure this approach facilitates delivery of the council's aims and objectives.
- 2.9 The final budget, including: any changes arising from consultation and equality impact assessments of saving proposals; referendum principles and tax base changes; the S151 Officers S25 Statement on the Robustness of the Budget Estimates and the Adequacy of Reserves, recommended levels of reserves and contingencies; and the final allocation of direct Government funding and other specific grants, will be presented to Cabinet on 7 February 2024 for recommendation to Council, and will be considered by full Council on 22 February 2024.

3. Recommendations

Cabinet are requested to:

- 3.1 Note, as a basis for consultation, the revised financial assumptions and projections within the draft revenue budget, the uncertainty around core funding, and that a further update be provided to Cabinet on 13 December 2023 outlining further actions close the £18.06m gap and balance the 2024/25 budget.
- 3.2 Note that the medium-term financial outlook position assumes an increase in council tax of 4.99% in 2024/25 (2.99% core increase plus 2% Adult Social Care precept) and 1.99% in the following 3 years, the assumed level of “reasonableness” in respect of the current referendum principles.
- 3.3 To note the draft policy savings proposals for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 2A and agree that they proceed to formal consultation, reporting back to Cabinet for a decision once consultation and equality impact assessment is complete.
- 3.4 Note and endorse the operational savings proposals for 2024/25 to 2027/28 set out in Appendix 2B of this report, and instruct officers to implement these under officer delegations, subject to any required consultation, equality impact assessment, and any changes arising as a result of the latter two.
- 3.5 Approve as a basis for consultation the current draft capital programme for 2024/25 to 2027/28 in section 4.29 to 4.44, and Appendices 3 and 4 - £132.08m for 2024/25 with a further £202.21m over the 3-year period 2025/26 to 2027/28.
- 3.6 Note that the level of contingency funds and general reserves will be set in line with the levels contained within the council’s MTF, the final level to be based on a detailed risk assessment, which will be reported to Cabinet and Council in February 2024 for approval.
- 3.7 Refer this report to Scrutiny Overview Committee on 11 December 2023, to enable the Committee’s comments to be considered by Cabinet. All Scrutiny Committees will also receive proposals relating to the individual remit of each Committee.

4. Know - Context

Key Timeline

- 4.1 The approach to budget setting for 2024/25 and the associated timeline was reported to Cabinet on 19 July 2023 and can be accessed at the following link: [Budget approach and timeline](#). The following sets out the key activities and reporting dates, following publication of this report:
 - Stakeholder consultation commencing 19 October 2023, including employee and trade union consultation, noting that full implementation of draft policy savings proposals identified within this report are subject to consultation and equality impact assessment.
 - Statutory consultation with non-domestic ratepayers (NNDR) payers.
 - Overview and Scrutiny Committees will receive the draft revenue budget and draft capital programme from 2 November 2023 with subsequent feedback to Cabinet on 13 December 2023.
 - Autumn Statement and provisional Settlement once received.

- Budget briefings for political groups and independent and non-affiliated members, as required.
- Council tax base to be approved by the S151 Officer by January 2024.
- Receipt of the final settlement late January / early February 2024.
- Recommendation of the final budget to Council by Cabinet on 7 February 2024.
- Council set the final budget envelope (statutory determinations), council tax and capital programme on 22 February 2024.

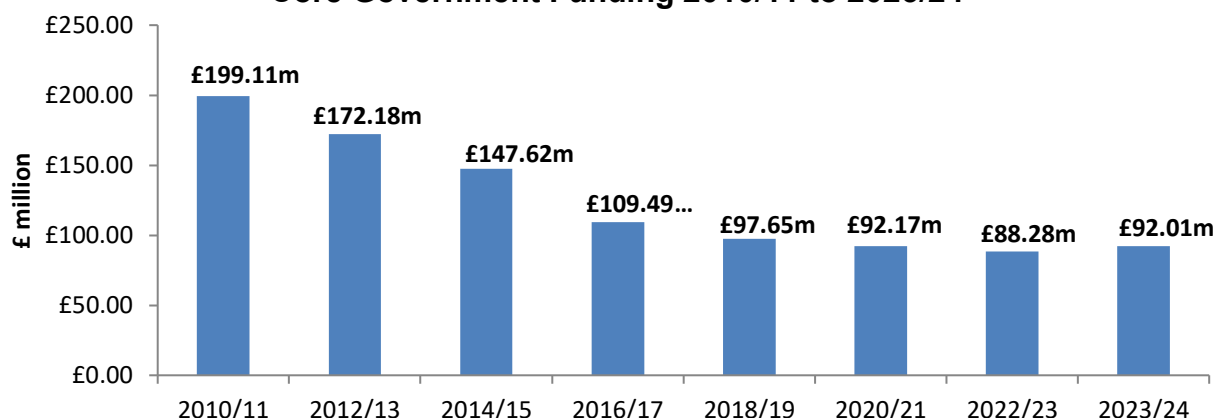
Walsall's Financial Context

Government central funding and business rate retention

4.2 Like all other public sector bodies, Walsall has seen Government grant funding reduce since the Emergency Budget of 2010 when the Government set out its initial plans to reduce the overall Government deficit. This has continued in successive Government Spending Reviews until 2020/21 when the one-year Spending Round confirmed that no Government department would see a cut to its budget with all being increased by at least inflation for that year, which continued up to 2022/23. No overall change in departmental expenditure budget envelopes followed for 2023/24 and 2024/25. Whilst overall funding actually increased for 2022/23 and 2023/24, a heavy reliance was placed on individual authorities' ability to raise a local Adult Social Care precept though council tax and provision of one-off rather than recurring grant funding (noting that Walsall increased council tax by an additional 1% social care precept allowable in 2022/23, and decided not to implement a further 2% allowable in 2023/24 due to the cost of living pressures faced by residents). Given the heavy reliance of Walsall Council on Government grant funding a more sustainable, longer term financial solution is required from Government to support future service and financial stability.

4.3 Government austerity measures have meant our direct funding has reduced considerably from 2010, with a loss of core revenue funding (revenue support grant, top up grant and business rates, net of rolled in grants) of c£107.1m to 2023/24. There remains considerable uncertainty in Government funding going forward from 2024/25 as we await further detail after the Autumn Statement 2023 and the Settlement in late December.

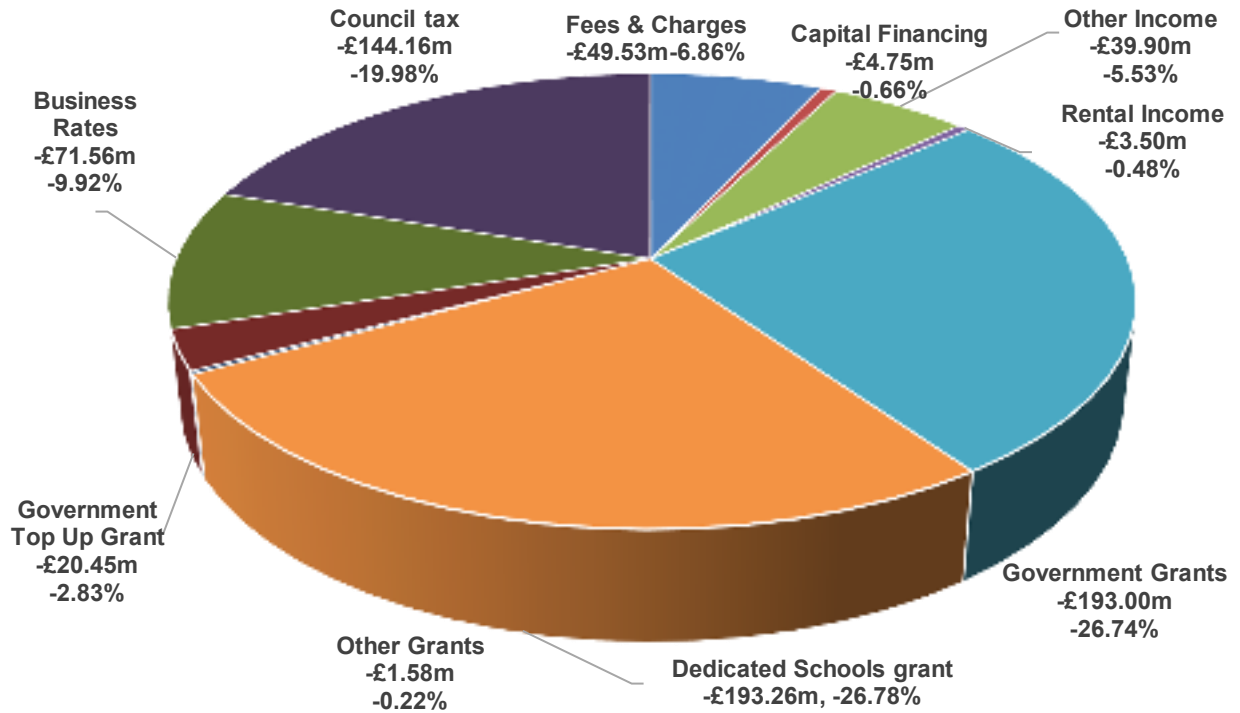
Core Government Funding 2010/11 to 2023/24



4.4 Walsall receives much (c66%) of its c£722m of funding for 2023/24 from central Government, including the core funding settlement - 13% (a combination of local business rates retention through 100% business rates pilot within the West Midlands, and top up grant direct from Government), core Schools Grant - 27% (dedicated schools grant (DSG) which is passported direct to schools) and Government grants for specific

services - 26% (Housing Benefit, Public Health, Better Care Fund etc). Income is summarised in the following pie chart.

Sources of Funding:

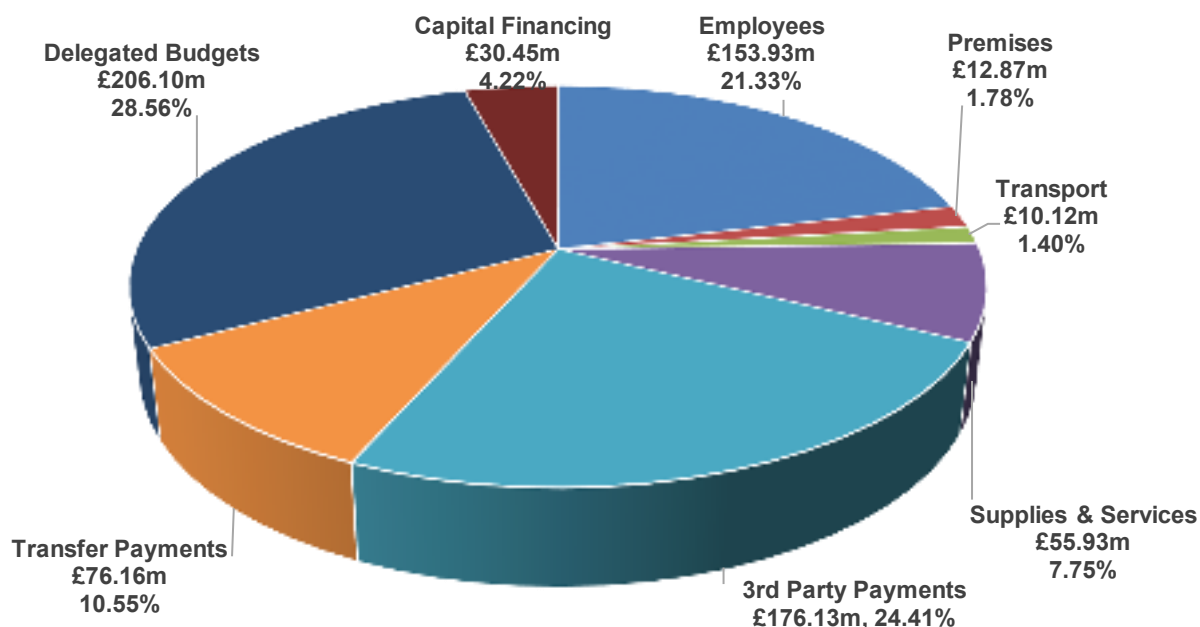


- 4.5 The Government replaced the way it funds councils with a new scheme known as Business Rate Retention (BRR) from April 2013. A review of the scheme by Government to amend the % of retained business rates from 49% to 75% was due to be finalised by 2021/22 but was later abandoned in November 2021 and the Government announced that it would look at introducing a new mechanism for redistributing funding to the authorities most in need. This has still to be introduced and nothing is expected to change in relation to 2024/25.
- 4.6 Areas that have agreed a Devolution Deal had the opportunity to be involved in a 100% business rates retention pilot. This was to provide the opportunity to shape national thinking about the eventual scheme, and to take forward further devolution. Walsall, along with the other six West Midlands Authorities, has been piloting the scheme from 1 April 2017. This means that Walsall retains 99% of business rates collected with the other 1% being paid over to the Fire Authority. This results in revenue support grant (RSG) no longer being paid to the authority but it still receiving a top up grant for our shortfall in retained business rates against the government’s assessment of baseline funding required for the authority. Walsall assumes we will continue with 100% business pilot for 2024/25 onwards at this point in time until we have any further direction.
- 4.7 Government set Walsall a baseline figure under the business rates retention scheme which is made up of the business rates local share and top up grant. The baseline for 2024/25 has not yet been announced and final figures will be reported to Cabinet in February 2024 following the Settlement and our final estimate of business rates income. Volatility in business rates will need careful monitoring throughout the year.
- 4.8 BRR and top up grant equate to 12.75% of our total funding. Along with other Government grants (public health, Better Care Fund, Adult Social Care grant etc but excluding DSG), the total equates to 39.49% of the council’s funding (excluding schools).

- 4.9 The future financial environment continues to be challenging for councils for 2024/25 and beyond, with significant uncertainties in future grants. Whilst Walsall can now keep business rates generated within our area rather than pooling for national redistribution, this benefit is limited by other parts of the funding mechanism, such as Government top slicing of funds to meet new burdens, safety net authorities, national capitalisation targets, etc and the additional risk of reliance on collection rates. Additionally, as part of BRR, the Government were consulting on transferring additional responsibilities to local authorities but again no announcement has been made at this time. This could lead to further pressures if these are not fully funded.
- 4.10 The council's second largest source of funding is council tax (19.98% of the council's gross spend is funded from council tax), which continues to be subject to Government restrictions on the amount that can be raised from this income stream, previously through 'capping', and now through the referendum principles. The budget currently assumes council tax increases of 4.99% in 2024/25 (inclusive of 2% precept for Adult Social Care) and 1.99% in the following 3 years.
- 4.11 Alongside reductions in funding, the council also faces increasing cost pressures, due to increasing demand (for example, as a result of the cost of living reducing individuals' disposable incomes further, larger numbers of older people requiring support to remain independent, etc) and new burdens imposed by Government, but without the corresponding full funding given. There is also considerable pressure in relation to the cost-of-living impact on pay, energy, contracts/third party spend in particular. Where there is a known on-going impact, this has been included within the draft budget figures.

In relation to how this funding is spent, the following pie charts provide further detail.

Gross expenditure by type of expenditure



Notes

- *Transfer payments include expenditure such as housing benefits, rent allowances and social services direct payments – for example payments for which no goods or services are received in return by the local authority.*
- *Delegated budgets include budgets for schools, community associations and allotments.*
- *Third Party Payments include payments to external contractors.*

Gross expenditure by outcome

Proud activity is developed around the following ten key outcomes, aligned to the Council Plan five key areas of focus:

Economic;

1. Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place;
2. Education, training and skills enable people to contribute to their community and our economy;

People;

3. People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home;
4. People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing and quality of life;

Internal focus;

5. We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use;
6. The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring;

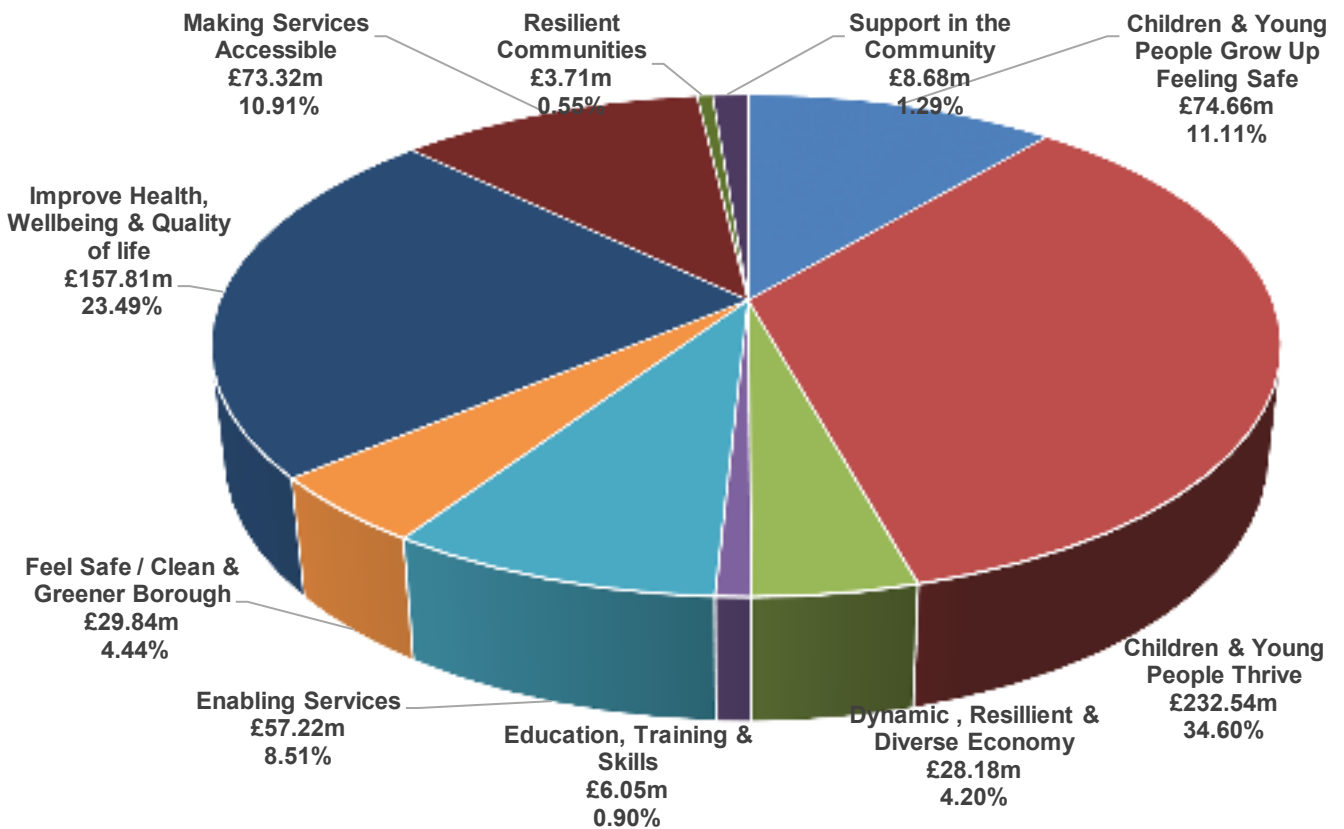
Children;

7. Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential;
8. Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere;

Communities;

9. Our communities will be more resilient and supportive of each other;
10. The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough.

Council services are aligned to the above outcomes. The following summarises 2023/24 gross expenditure by outcome as reported in the budget report in February 2023



4.12 In summary the main areas of uncertainty and pressure are:

- The existing and future unknown impact of the cost-of-living crisis on council services, including the rising costs of inflation (RPI increase of 9.1% and CPI 6.7% announced for August 2023) which is expected to fall over the remainder of this year. This impacts all services through pay, energy, street lighting, fuel, borrowing rates, contracted services etc.
- Post Covid-19 reset impacting on service delivery and finances.
- Changes in core government grant funding, for example:
 - Impact of the review of full business rate retention (BRR).
 - Impact of the future review of Relative Needs and Resources (formerly the Fair Funding Review) to include the setting of new baseline funding allocations, subject to confirmation.
 - Uncertainty of core government funding beyond 2023/24.
 - Continuation or otherwise and the level of other specific grants e.g., Public Health, Improved Better Care Fund, Supporting Families, Social Care grant, Market sustainability etc.
- Increases and changes in demand:
 - From an ageing population, increases in care package costs (partly linked to cost of living) and the likely ongoing post covid impact have put a strain on local authority systems both in financial and operational terms. For example, Adult Social Care packages and placements costs have risen by £30.31m from £68.70m in 2017/18 to £99.01m in August 2023 – an increase of 44.12%.
 - Children and young people in care – in March 2018, there were 930 children and young people receiving care or support from the local authority (644 children in care / 286 other support) with an average cost per placement of £735 per week for children in care and £141 per week for other support. In comparison, as at the end of August 2023, numbers had risen to 1,117 (650 children in care / 467 other support) with average costs of £1,774 per week for children in care and £422 per week for other support. Placements costs have risen by 151% in the past four years whilst children in care numbers have increased by 20%.
The biggest impact on costs has been within external residential placements which have risen from an average cost of £3,802 per week in March 2018 to £6,123 in August 2023. The number of children has also increased from 32 in March 2018 to 73 in August 2023. The rise in placement costs is mainly due to changes in legislation, increased numbers of complex cases and shortage in placements.
- Government's continued reliance on individual council's ability to raise income through council tax increases, rather than providing national ongoing funding to support social care pressures, etc.
- Welfare reform, including universal credit.
- The impact of the delayed adult social care reforms.
- Increased corporate costs, including costs in relation to pay and pensions.

4.13 Since the Emergency Budget 2010, the council has reduced its spending by c£265m over the period 2010/11 to 2023/24, £107m from a reduction in Government grant and £158m from cost pressures. In considering future resource allocation, funding for the development of services will need to be met from the redirection of existing resources, reducing existing spend and the identification of new or revised income sources. The council will need to continue to do things differently and do different things, and in some cases stop doing things that are not in line with Council Plan priorities.

Draft Revenue Budget 2024/25 to 2027/28

Budget Approach / Framework

- 4.14 Cabinet on 19 July 2023 approved the budget approach for 2024/25 to 2027/28 and can be accessed at [Budget approach and timeline](#). Resources are allocated and budgets set within a framework of protocols and guidelines, in particular the Council Plan and MTFP. Decisions have to be made about how to achieve a balanced budget in the context of the needs of the borough and also to ensure that we continue to care for the most vulnerable in our communities. Whilst it is recognised that full Council will only set the council tax bands for 2024/25 in February 2024, the budget will continue to take a four-year view, allowing for a more strategic focus to service re-design and savings aligning the finances more directly to the objectives, outcomes, and markers of success of the council and maintaining/improving performance against these.

Maximising Outcomes through Budgeting 2024/25 onwards

- 4.15 Our approach to budget setting was established in 2020 with overall financial savings expected to be delivered via Proud activity. For 2024/25 Proud work streams will continue to provide the 'enablers' to allow Directorates to deliver through Service Transformation Plans (STP's).
- 4.16 Directors reviewed their (STP's to identify how individual services can be transformed to generate further efficiencies, along with any short-term investment requirements to enable this to progress, linking their current and future service delivery with Council priority outcomes as per the Council Plan. This allows for identification of potential transformation activity and associated savings for future financial years. Those identified to date are outlined within this report, with further work in train to identify further opportunities to close the financial gap for 2024/25 and future years.
- 4.17 The Council Plan direction of travel approach sets out how the budget will be aligned to deliver the desired outcome i.e., through different amounts of delivery, coordination, influencing, signposting, or regulating. A review of the current delivery model will be undertaken alongside the direction of travel and re-prioritised where appropriate to maximise value for money and overall delivery of outcomes and ensuring the 2024/25 onwards budget is built and developed on this moving forward.

Medium Term Financial Outlook (MTFO) and Revisions to Assumptions

- 4.18 Following national and local changes since the 2023/24 to 2026/27 budget was set in February 2023, the MTFO has been rolled forward (with 2027/28 added), reviewed and updated to reflect significant ongoing changes in council demand during the current year and updated projections of future demand and income. It has also been updated to reflect changes in core and local funding where known. The resulting council tax requirement arising from funding and investment assumptions from 2024/25 to 2027/28 is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Council Tax requirement				
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Council tax Requirement	144.16	152.40	156.50	160.69
Cost Pressures:				
Growth / Investment (Appendix 1)	57.69	30.08	23.18	21.68
Savings plans identified (Appendix 2)	(13.58)	(9.37)	(7.91)	(6.72)
Other savings to be identified	(18.06)	(14.23)	(8.57)	(9.36)
Other movements / funding changes:				
Other changes including base budget adjustments, grants, income	(8.09)	(0.46)	(0.33)	0.94
Core Funding changes	(5.85)	(3.12)	(2.68)	(2.73)
Collection fund (surplus) / deficit	1.22	0.00	0.00	0.00
Transfer to / (from) reserves	(5.09)	1.20	0.50	0.50
Revised Council Tax Requirement	152.40	156.50	160.69	165.00
Council Tax Increase – General	2.99%	1.99%	1.99%	1.99%
Council Tax Increase – Adult Social Care precept	2.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Primarily, investment covers:

1. *Provision for pay and pensions (corporate cost pressures) and contractual inflation:*
 - Annual pay increase and provision for pay increments.
 - Impact of pension auto-enrolment and tri-annual employer pensions contributions based on the latest valuation information.
 - Provision for contractual increases.
 - Managing the cost of energy and fuel price changes as a result of the cost-of-living impact.

2. *Demand, demographic changes and managing market conditions within Services (demand led cost pressures):*
 - Increases in placements/costs for children in care.
 - Increased care packages/costs within Adult Social Care arising from an increased ageing population with more complex care needs, linked to Adult Social Care, Better Care Fund and Hospital Discharge funding announced in the Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022.
 - Investment to vulnerable residents in crisis.
 - Support to the Adult Social Care market.
 - Increase in the number of clients requiring home to school transport.
 - Increases in fostering and Special Guardianship Orders fees.

3. *Other service-based pressures/investments:*
 - Investment to deliver change and new ways of working through Proud transformation.
 - Reinstatement of specific 2023/24 approved savings that cannot be delivered e.g. Staff car parking due to equality impact (£18k), charging developers for travel plans due to recruitment issues (£30k), rewilding of urban grassed areas (£352k), increased recycling rates (£382k), and residual garden waste disposal (£30k) – these have been replaced with alternative savings;
 - Reductions in grants such as housing benefit administration grant.
 - Reduction in traded services income from schools (Schools attendance services,

payroll and pensions, information governance).

- Continued funding of Crisis Support, albeit at a reduced level.
- Recruitment and retention, particularly within Adults and Childrens Services.
- Review of Digital and Technology infrastructure requirements including Mosaic case management, Cloud/ licences, and associated resources.
- Review of resources within Support Services (Digital and Technology, Human Resources Specialist Services, Finance).

4. *Other central provisions:*

- Review of the capital financing, treasury debt and investment portfolio.
- Revenue implications of the capital programme.

4.19 Table 2 summarises the movements in the MTFO, including changes to investments, resulting in a revised saving requirement over the period of £87.80m (£30.53m original plus revised assumptions impact of £57.27m).

Table 2: Movement in savings requirement					
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28*	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Savings required per Council February 2023 (in line with original MTFO)	8.10	13.24	9.19	0.00	30.53
Further year added	0.00	0.00	0.00	9.53	9.53
Central pressures (pay, capital financing)	(10.84)	0.57	0.57	0.57	(9.12)
Service pressures (costs and demand)	38.11	10.11	7.09	5.08	60.40
Funding assumptions and other changes	(3.73)	(0.32)	(0.38)	0.90	(3.54)
Revised savings requirement as above	31.64	23.60	16.48	16.08	87.80

* 2027/28 has been added to the rolling MTFO for the first time and therefore was not included in the February budget report.

The main changes in MTFO assumptions relate to the increased need for additional growth to fund demand and cost of living pressures with Children's and Adult Social Care Services in particular, and is summarised as follows:

Central pressures (Reduction of £9.1m over 4 years)

- Funding of the ongoing impact of the 2023/24 pay offer £1.3m.
- Reduction in revenue implications of capital allocation in 2024/25 (£96k).
- Central cost of living/demand provision removed for 2024/25 (£6.5m), but £1.5m provision retained for future years.
- Utilisation of Adult Social Care grant held centrally for social care pressures (£3.9m).

Service Pressures (Increase of £60.4m over 4 years):

- Adult Social Care £39.2m
 - Demand – inflow/attrition, placement costs increased post package reviews - net £18.8m increase.
 - Demand – uplifts – net £9.4m increase.
 - Demand – other changes e.g.s117, intermediate care, equipment store £1.1m
 - Better Care Funding not falling out (£2m).
 - Client Income shortfall £2.8m.
 - Inflationary – Housing 21, intermediate care uplifts £3.9m.
 - Public Health £489k.
 - Policy and Strategy hub – Walsall 2040 £46k.

- Community reablement and technology £1.3m.
- Better Care grant changes £921k.
- Other structural / digital and technology changes £2.4m).
- Children's Services (£19.3m)
 - Children in care demand changes (£744k).
 - Home to school transport £422k.
 - Children in care placement costs / foster care / special guardianship order allowances / carer uplifts £17.4m.
 - Revenue costs of new internal residential homes £671k.
 - Grant changes – Supported Accommodation / Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children £58k.
 - Other structural / digital and technology changes £2.2m.
 - Other changes – legal fees, transport costs, reduction in traded income £263k.
- Customer Engagement £0.9m
 - Reduction in crisis support (£200k).
 - Bringing Housing register in house £225k.
 - Increase in bed and breakfast costs £622.
 - Other changes – bank charges / housing benefit grant £161k.
- Economy, Environment and Communities £2.0m
 - Economic Growth Programme funding not now falling out (£1m).
 - Planning posts and migration to Land Registry £141k.
 - Reinstated savings from 2023/24 - staff car parking, rewilding, charging developers, recycling rates, garden waste disposal, £813k.
 - Reintroduce a youth team into the community £100k.
 - Inflationary pressures £889k.
 - Community Protection officers, Town Centre Guardians £312k.
 - Other changes – agency, Environmental Health posts, licensing income shortfall £802k.
- Resources and Transformation (£0.8m)
 - Economic Growth Programme funding not now falling out (£918k).
 - Digital and Technology structural changes to meet demand part funded from capital (£159k).
 - Reduction in schools take up for Payroll/Pensions and Information Governance £122k.
 - Black country consortium subscription no longer required (£90k).

Funding assumptions and other changes (Reduction of £3.5m over 4 years):

- Review of capital financing and risks £3.1m.
- Removal of 'red ragged' Customer Access Management saving £2.9m – under review.
- Change in business rates forecast income (£1.4m).
- Other central changes – grants / utilisation of central funds (£5m).
- Social Care Precept of 2% in 2024/25 (£3.1m) along with 2.99% general increase.

4.20 Further to the changes in assumptions, the draft budget 2024/25 – 2027/28 includes provision for growth and investment of c£133m (£57.69m in 2024/25), as shown in Appendix 1. Assumptions will be kept under continual review and are expected to change as the budget process progresses. Core funding will be updated on receipt of the draft and final Settlements and allocations of specific grants.

Earmarked Reserves

4.21 Included within the MTFO are a number of transfers to and (from) earmarked reserves to support the budget. The details of these are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Summary of (use of) / transfer to Earmarked Reserves					
Reserve	Details	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m
Street Lighting PFI	To cover costs relating to Street Lighting PFI	(0.45)	(0.45)	(0.45)	(0.45)
Children's Complex Cases	To cover one off costs relating to complex cases	(0.18)	0.00	0.00	0.00
Proud	To cover costs relating to the centre of excellence	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.29)
HR Specialist Services	To cover one off investment for business support for Children's Services	(0.28)	0.00	0.00	0.00
Redundancy	To replenish reserve to fund one of costs relating to redundancy payments	0.00	0.50	0.50	0.50
Total		(1.20)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.24)

MTFO Savings Requirements

4.22 Our approach to budget setting was established in 2020 with overall financial savings expected to be delivered via Proud activity. For 2024/25 Proud work streams will continue to provide the 'enablers' to allow directorates to deliver their service transformation plans. As set out in table 2 above, the changes in assumptions reflected in the updated MTFO changed the quantum of the funding gap, with the savings required to be delivered over the period 2024/25 to 2027/28 set out below, a total of c£87.80m.

2024/25 - £31.64m

2025/26 - £23.60m

2026/27 - £16.48m

2027/28 - £16.08m

Walsall Proud Benefit Opportunities

4.23 The budget process continues to build on the blended working principles established in 2021 that capitalises on the progress made using technology and digital working, it enables the continuation of opportunities introduced over the last 2 years, and aligns to the tangible delivery of the 3 Proud Promises, which aim to:

- **Improve outcomes and customer experience.**
 - To minimise the need for physical interactions with citizens through the use of digital / virtual technologies leading to more inclusive and flexible service access (i.e., 24-hour self-service).
 - To consider the closure of services that don't contribute well to delivering outcomes or reducing inequality.
 - To build in and embed resilience to future waves of Covid-19 or shocks.
 - Use of technology and digitalisation to streamline processes and reduce costs.

- **Improve employee satisfaction and engagement.**
 - To maintain the health and wellbeing of employees.
 - To enable employees to work in the most flexible ways e.g., use new technologies, acknowledge presenteeism as an old way of working, review policies and procedures where needed.
 - Support equalities and diversity and the employee survey action plan.

- **Improve service efficiency and performance.**
 - To enable new ways of working to minimise our estate footprint (within reasonable parameters e.g., not adopt hot-desking policy whilst covid-19 remains a risk).
 - To focus on achieving financial sustainability for the organisation through cost reduction and income generation.
 - To promote an outcome focussed culture.

Service Transformation Planning process

4.24 For 2024/25 Proud work streams will continue to provide the 'enablers' to allow Directorates to deliver through STP's.

4.25 Directors and their Heads of Service have been tasked with completion of new STP's linking their current and future service delivery with council priority outcomes as per the Council Plan. This will allow for identification of potential transformation activity and associated savings for future financial years. These plans have identified draft savings options for transformational change, as outlined in **Appendix 2**, which Cabinet are asked to consider as part of the budget setting process for 2024/25 and future years.

Summary of Savings identified.

4.26 Proud has identified £13.58m of financial benefit for 2024/25 (including the review of the £8.10m identified in the budget report to Council in February 2023). There is also £9.37m identified for 2025/26, £7.91m for 2026/27 and £6.72m for 2027/28. Benefits / savings are classified into two categories:

1. Policy Proposals - which require an Executive decision to proceed, and which will be referred for public consultation and equality impact assessment. Policy proposals are shown on Appendix 2A, and these total £333k in 2024/25 (£453k over the four years to 2027/28).
2. Operational Proposals – savings which officers have delegations to implement; examples include restructures, back-office savings, operational efficiencies. These are shown at Appendix 2B, and total £13.25m in 2024/25 (£37.12m over the four years to 2027/28).

Some proposals require investment to support delivery. Such investment will only be allocated if the relevant saving proposal is included within Cabinet's final budget report in February, once consultation and equality impact assessment has concluded.

Medium Term Financial Outlook (MTFO) and 2025 – 2028 Financial Strategy

4.27 The savings identified at Appendix 2 will assist in closing the gap over the four years to 2027/28. A gap of £18.06m remains after the delivery of the £13.58m saving identified for 2024/25, with a further £14.24m saving requirement for 2025/26, £8.57m for 2026/27 and £9.36m for 2027/28 as shown in table 4 below. Through budget week and beyond, a number of themes were identified for prioritisation to take forward to support the 2024/25 position and also form the foundations of the medium-term financial strategy, building on the work of the Proud programme. Directors continue to work on identifying additional options for Members consideration, and further reports will be presented to Cabinet outlining further options to balance the budget for 2024/25 onwards. A work stream review of the STP's is taking place to ensure that they maximise opportunities from the Proud ways of working and capabilities, and therefore capture the full benefits; to ensure they capture innovative thinking; and to challenge any opportunities to accelerate identified savings.

Table 4: Movement in savings requirement - current gap					
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Savings requirement as shown in table 2 above	31.64	23.61	16.48	16.08	87.80
Savings plans identified (Appendix 2)	(13.58)	(9.37)	(7.91)	(6.72)	(37.57)
Savings to be identified (Current gap)	18.06	14.24	8.57	9.36	50.23

4.28 Directors continue to work on the delivery plans for these future opportunities. The proposals set out in this report do not balance the budget for 2024/25, so there will be a requirement to report back on changes and options to close the gap at the next meeting of Cabinet on 13 December 2023.

Draft Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28

4.29 The key objective of the Capital Strategy is to deliver a capital programme that:

- Ensures the council's capital assets are used to support the delivery of priorities within the Council Plan and the council's vision.
- Links with the council's Strategic Asset Plan.
- Is affordable, financially prudent and sustainable.
- Ensures the most cost-effective use is made of existing assets and new capital investment, and;
- Supports other Walsall service specific plans and strategies.

4.30 The approach to capital planning includes:

- The need to match priority capital investment decisions against the council's limited internal resources.
- To maximise external funding sources.
- To optimise borrowing where there is an agreed deliverable pay back mechanism.
- To ensure the council's health and safety, etc. commitments are adequately covered.
- To minimise the call on revenue resources.

4.31 In practical terms the basic approach is to use the Strategic Asset Plan to:

- Maintain required assets to meet the needs of the services and people that use them.
- Evaluate options for disposal of surplus assets.
- Develop sustainable, cost-effective new assets in response to the council's priorities.

4.32 However there will be an increasing emphasis on:

- Investing in activity that unlocks external investment in the borough.
- Investing in service redesign to drive out long term revenue savings.
- Investing in the creation of an efficient and effective operational estate.
- Investing in assets that support the strengthening of the borough's economy.

4.33 Capital programme resources are limited. The financing for capital investment is heavily reliant on grants and funding received from the Government. The success that Walsall has had in securing a wide range of external funding may be harder to achieve as many of the sources of funding may stop or reduce.

4.34 The remaining flexibility is currently through capital receipts and borrowing. Capital receipts projections however are limited, and fully dependent on when council assets are sold. Earmarking of capital receipts beyond what we are statutorily obliged to do is not recommended without overall strategic consideration of the entire capital programme. Use of borrowing incurs ongoing revenue debt charges and impacts on council taxpayers. The Chancellor is currently reviewing current borrowing regulations which may involve a cap on borrowing levels, restricting authorities' ability to fund capital expenditure.

4.35 Capital allocations and grants from Government and other sources have not, in some cases, been provided, therefore best estimates have been used, based on published information to date. Any further reduction in funding will require amendments to the draft programme.

4.36 Despite the above difficulties, significant investment is planned and funded over the four years to 2027/28. The council is able to fund existing commitments and has, through prioritisation of bids, resources and sound treasury management, been able to support new investment into key services, and areas of capital investment need, linked to Walsall Proud activity.

4.37 Cabinet determine the projects to be included within the capital programme in the light of the relative priorities and the overall impact on the revenue budget. Schemes that require use of the council's own capital resources (such as through borrowing or capital receipts), are scored and prioritised in accordance with a matrix, in order to assist the decision-making process:

- For Delivery of Capital projects - alignment to local plans and strategies; deliverability; benefit to cost ratio; amount of match-funding to be levered in; commercialisation - Income generation / land sales etc. to be considered to enable funds to be recycled so that more of the pipeline can be funded in the longer term; generation of savings in the form of council tax, business rate income, revenue income or operational cost savings generated as a result of this investment to support the MTFO.
- For Development Pool Capital projects - alignment to local plans and strategies; long term deliverability; benefit to cost ratio; and the potential for the wider scheme

to secure external funding / match funding / recycling of funds i.e., commercialisation, overage, land sale etc so that more development schemes can be funded in the longer term.

4.38 The list of schemes included in the draft capital programme for 2024/25 to 2027/28 are shown at Appendix 3 (council funded) and Appendix 4 (externally funded). Table 5 below shows the draft capital programme against available resources.

Table 5: Draft Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28				
Anticipated Capital Resources	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Capital receipts projected	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
General borrowing as per Council 23 February 2023	4.67	4.67	4.67	4.67
Other scheme borrowing as per Council 23 February 2023	56.84	17.32	3.87	0.00
Carry Forwards from previous years - Enterprise Zones	2.71	0.00	0.00	0.00
Revenue contribution to capital - burial levy	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
Funding as approved by Council 23 February 2023	65.74	23.51	10.06	6.19
Reprofiling of schemes as approved by Cabinet 19 July 2023 - council funded only	14.45	27.63	13.02	0.00
Adjustment to borrowing requirement	(4.96)	3.77	(1.37)	1.97
Total Council Funding	75.23	54.91	21.71	8.16
Externally Funded Schemes	56.85	43.37	55.96	18.10
Total capital resources	132.08	98.28	77.67	26.26
<u>Draft Capital Programme</u>				
Rolling Programme Schemes	4.58	4.71	4.65	4.65
Prior Year Approvals	25.74	23.95	3.89	2.82
Development investment	43.20	25.05	11.25	0.08
New Capital Schemes	1.71	1.20	1.92	0.61
Total Council Funded Schemes (Appendix 3)	75.23	54.91	21.71	8.16
Externally Funded Schemes (Appendix 4)	56.85	43.37	55.96	18.10
Total draft capital programme	132.08	98.28	77.67	26.26
Funding shortfall (surplus)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

4.39 Council funded schemes identified in Appendix 3 include a refresh of the draft programme reported to Council in February 2023, with a number of projects added during 2023/24 following Cabinet approval. For 2024/25 onwards, the full impact of these projects will be reviewed, and funding revisited as part of the rolling annual budget process. There may be a number of schemes that will require match funding in year to secure external resources, which will be reviewed in year and funds drawn down as projects are confirmed. Schemes currently in the draft programme are those that have been assessed by the Council's Strategic Investment Board as meeting the Council Plan priorities and directly linked to the Strategic Asset Plan 2022-27 which was approved by Cabinet on 20 April 2022. The impact of inflation, material shortages, etc are also currently under review and will need to be accommodated from identified resources.

4.40 Capital receipts projections are based on professional estimates of property colleagues. Any additional receipts received in year (excluding those earmarked for specific schemes) will be set aside to fund any urgent requests for funding, including any match funding requirements received in year, subject to approval.

4.41 Borrowing is funded from the council's own resources – generated through savings, and/or paid for via council tax. Councils are allowed to borrow in accordance with the Treasury Management Code of Practice.

4.42 As well as those in the draft programme, there are a number of large capital schemes that are in development or planning stages. It is expected that as individual business cases are developed and considered by Cabinet and/or Council, they are then included in the latest update of the capital programme if they are deemed to be a high priority and affordable. Funding for these will need to be identified and may be through a combination of borrowing and/or other contributions. Where practical, a payback agreement will be implemented, whereby projects should, wherever possible be self-funded over the life of the project and beyond.

4.43 A provision of £40m was approved by Council in February 2021, with a further £30m approved by Council in February 2022, and a further £29m by Council in February 2023 – an adjusted total of £99m over the period to support council development investment opportunities, including emerging regeneration schemes and major capital projects, and to provide funding to support those schemes in development stages. The current list of schemes are under review and will be provided in the budget update report to Cabinet on 13 December 2023. This includes schemes where funding or match funding is required (subject to external funding bidding processes) in order for some of these projects to progress as there is insufficient headroom within the existing capital programme to fund all of these development opportunities. This provision is held centrally. Of the £99m total provision, approximately £46m has been allocated, with the remaining £53m (development investment line referred to in Appendix 3C) to be allocated. To access these funds, an outline business case is required to be endorsed by the council's Strategic Investment Board, followed by a full business case for Cabinet approval.

4.44 For externally funded schemes, where a bidding process is required, it is assumed the full cost of the project is met from external grant and/or third-party contributions. If it becomes clear during the process that this is not the case, the project cannot proceed if the external funds cannot be sourced.

Draft Leasing Programme

4.45 The 2024/25 leasing programme totals £1.37m, summarised in Table 6 below. Leasing minimises the call on capital resources by spreading the acquisition cost over a number of years. Revenue funds are required to finance operating leases and are included in the revenue budget. There is expected to be a carry forward from 2023/24 which is dependent on timings on acquisition of vehicles.

Table 6: Leasing Programme	Capital £m	Revenue £m
Light Commercial vehicles	0.73	0.64
Refuse Vehicles	3.26	0.38
Tractors and Agricultural Implements	0.10	0.28
Welfare vehicles	0.00	0.07
Total	4.09	1.37

Council Plan priorities

4.46 The budget is the financial plan supporting delivery of the organisation's key objectives and priorities. The budget process is a four yearly cycle, updated annually, aiming to support delivery of council priorities and outcomes within available resources. It aims to achieve this through the delivery of efficiencies, income reviews and service reviews and redesign to redirect existing and reducing resources to areas of high council priority in order to deliver the council outcomes. This budget has been prepared using the council's high-level purpose and priorities as outlined in the approved Council Plan.

Risk management

4.47 The budget process is governed by the overarching MTFP and Council Plan. Risk management is an integral part of this activity and is embedded in budget preparation, monitoring, and forecasting to enable potential budget variances and risks to be identified early and addressed.

4.48 There is still uncertainty around Government funding for 2024/25 and beyond due to the lack of Government allocations beyond the short term and the uncertainty around changes arising from the Review of Relative Needs and Resources (formerly the Fair Funding Review) and Business Rates Revaluation. The MTFP continues to be regularly reviewed to ensure all significant changes are reflected.

4.49 There is a risk that funding will reduce more than anticipated or that further pressures will emerge, whether cost of living related or otherwise, which will require the council to address prior to setting the budget in February 2024. As the need for savings increases, the council's ability to protect services from being reduced or ceasing diminishes.

4.50 The budget is risk assessed and this will be used to formulate the recommended level of contingencies and reserves. The outcome of this will be reported to Cabinet and Council in the final budget report.

Financial implications

4.51 The council must set a balanced budget to meet its legal requirements as set out under legal implications. There is more to do to close the £18.06m remaining gap.

Legal implications

4.52 Under the Local Government Act, an authority must set a council tax and balanced budget, giving 14 days' notice of the council tax level prior to the date of billing. The Council must set a budget before 11 March of each year. This will include the S151 Officer's S25 Statement on the Robustness of the Budget and the Adequacy of the Reserves for which the budget provides, together with an assessment of risk.

4.53 The collection fund and council tax base are governed by Statutory Instrument 2012 No.2914 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012. The council is legally obliged to set the council tax base and notify the precepting authorities by 31 January each year.

Procurement Implications / Social Value

4.54 There are no direct implications arising from this report. Any procurement implications as a result of the development of the budget or savings and investment proposals will be set out within the relevant proposals as they are developed.

Property implications

4.55 Cabinet on 20 April 2022 approved the council's Strategic Asset Plan 2022-27. The Strategic Asset Plan is the key document which sets out the council's vision and approach for the management of its property portfolio under the Corporate Landlord model. The Corporate Landlord model approach takes a more strategic approach to property and asset management across the council, bringing together property, facilities management and commissioning responsibilities into a key enabling service under the council's new functional model. This will ultimately enable the development and implementation of an estate that supports Proud and the wider corporate objectives of the council. Any direct property implications as a result of the budget or capital programme will be set out as they are developed.

Health and Wellbeing implications

4.56 This report is prepared with consideration of any impacts that any decisions would have on health and wellbeing. Any implications arising from the budget will be reported to members during budget setting along with any actions which are required to be addressed prior to implementation of budget proposals.

Staffing implications

4.57 There will be some staffing implications arising from proposals within this report. The contribution of the trade unions will be important in the council achieving its key aims and objectives particularly in these challenging times. Officers and members will consult widely with them on the employee implications of service redesign and delivery.

4.58 Staff affected by proposals arising from the review of Proud activity will be supported as appropriate throughout the process and the number of redundancies will be minimised wherever possible.

Reducing inequalities

4.59 Reducing inequalities is the council's vision as set out in the Council Plan. Assessing the impact of proposed organisational changes and changes to policies, procedures and services is a positive opportunity for the council to ensure good decisions are made, based on robust evidence. It is clear that the decisions taken by individual services do not operate in isolation. Thus, when making policy, it is important not just to look at the potential impact of individual measures, but also to ensure that their interaction is properly understood and that the cumulative impact is taken into account. Understanding the cumulative impact on protected groups should be a pre-requisite of any policy making process.

4.60 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty an analysis of impact on equality must contain sufficient and suitable information to enable the council to;

- Demonstrate it has given 'due regard' to the aims of the equality duty in decision making.

- Consider ways of mitigating or avoiding any adverse impacts.

4.61 The council uses an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) to check the lawfulness of council decisions in relation to the impact on people with certain characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. An EqIA must contain relevant data and sufficient analysis to enable Members to understand the equality implications of a proposal and any alternative options before any decisions are arrived at.

4.62 Completing an EqIA provides a positive opportunity to ensure that the council makes better decisions, based on robust evidence, and will identify any anticipated impact on residents, service users and staff that fall within the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act. Equality impact assessments are undertaken on service and organisational change proposals as they develop and any implications reported as they arise, to allow Cabinet to consider and make any revisions required.

4.63 Initial screening EqIAs are carried out on options to indicate whether full EqIAs will be required. Full EqIAs identify the outcomes, and their potential impacts, and document the reasons for this decision. There are four possible outcomes:

A. No major change required:

When no adverse impact is identified and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken

B. Adjustments are needed to adverse impact to better promote equality.

C. Continue despite possible adverse impact:

Compelling reasons will be needed, and mitigating actions may be required to minimise adverse impact.

D. Stop and rethink the proposal:

When an EqIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination and needs to be reviewed immediately

4.64 If adjustments are needed or a potential adverse impact is identified, an action plan is developed to show how this will be mitigated or in exceptional circumstances, justified. EqIAs will be considered by Cabinet members, prior to any decision being made as to the final proposals to be included in the final Budget report to Council.

Climate Change

4.65 The budget and capital programme will need to be prepared with consideration of the council's Climate Change Action Plan, and budget proposals will be assessed against the six key areas of the plan: strategy, energy, waste, transport, nature, resilience, and adaptation as appropriate. Proposals within this budget included investment in the service to support the plan.

Consultation

4.66 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public involvement in Health Act 2007 places a general duty on every local authority in England to take such steps as it considers appropriate to secure that representatives of local persons (or of local persons of a particular description) are involved in the exercise of any of its functions, among other things by being consulted about the exercise of the function. The 2010 Equality Act, whilst not imposing a specific duty to consult, lays a requirement to have due regard to the equality impact when exercising its function.

4.67 Consultation is an integral part of the budget process and arrangements are in place to consult with a range of communities and stakeholders as appropriate (the public, councillors, business rate payers, voluntary and community organisations, etc.). Consultation will be publicised and communicated widely via a range of methods and channels.

4.68 Consultation will be undertaken on policy related draft budget options as they develop from Proud activity and findings presented to Cabinet. Consultation will primarily be conducted online. However, in order to ensure that everyone who wants to have their say is able to, in line with our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), alternative formats and support to respond will be provided to those who request it. Findings along with equality impact assessments will be reported to Cabinet for their consideration and to inform Cabinet's final budget recommendations to Council in February 2024.

4.69 This report will be forwarded to Overview Scrutiny Committees for consultation purposes, to allow each Committee to comment on the budget proposals within their remit.

5. Decide

5.1 As set out in the legal section, councils are required to set a legal budget. This report is the first stage in that process and Cabinet are asked to approve the recommendations as set out, to allow consultation to commence.

6. Respond

6.1 Following Cabinet's consideration, draft proposals will be referred for consultation as required, feedback provided to Cabinet and the council will publish the feedback and the council's response to it.

7. Review

7.1 Further updates will be presented to Cabinet as required, including any feedback from consultation, in advance of the final budget report to Cabinet on 7 February 2024.

Summary of appendices:

- 1 Summary of New Growth and Investment 2024/25 to 2027/28 aligned to Proud Outcomes.
- 2 Benefits Realisation (Savings) for Proud activity by Outcome 2024/25 to 2027/28.
- 3 Draft Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28 – Council Funded Schemes.
- 4 Draft Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28 – External Funded Schemes.

Background papers:

- Various financial and working papers.
- Corporate Budget Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27, incorporating the Capital Strategy; and the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2023/24 – Council 23 February 2023.
- Corporate Financial Performance 2023/24 and approach to Budget Setting for 2024/25 - Cabinet 19 July 2023

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**Shaun Darcy - S151 Officer,
and Director of Finance,
Corporate Landlord and Assurance
18 October 2023**



**Judith Greenhalgh
Interim Executive Director – Resources
18 October 2023**



**Councillor M Bird
Leader of the Council
18 October 2023**

Appendix 1 - Summary of New Growth and Investment 2024/25 to 2027/28 aligned to Proud Outcomes

Directorate	Ref No	Details of Growth by outcome	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place							
Economy, Environment & Communities	1	Town Centre Officer post - to support the regeneration of the high street - funded from Public Health Grant	86,315	0	0	0	86,315
	2	Contractual inflation - Urban Traffic Control	22,764	22,764	22,764	22,764	91,056
	3	Contractual inflation - Traffic Control	73,900	13,574	12,768	13,140	113,382
	4	Contractual inflation - Highways maintenance	172,371	129,279	118,505	118,505	538,660
	5A	Under-recovery of planning income	220,000	0	0	0	220,000
	5B	Planning fee consultation	(220,000)	0	0	0	(220,000)
	6	New posts within planning and land registry to deal with increased demand - linked to saving OP9	210,934	70,000	(140,000)	0	140,934
	7	Remove staff parking charges saving from 2023/24	18,000	0	0	0	18,000
8	Remove charge developers for travel plans saving from 2023/24	30,000	0	0	0	30,000	
Total Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place			614,284	235,617	14,037	154,409	1,018,347
People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home							
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement	9	Crisis support - to support Walsall residents in crisis	300,000	0	0	0	300,000
Total People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home			300,000	0	0	0	300,000
People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing and quality of life							
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub	10	Social Care increase in demand pressures (inflow/attrition)	15,903,627	2,981,815	1,661,716	1,024,037	21,571,195
	11	Contract price uplift (for under 65's not covered by Fair Cost of Care)	3,992,391	2,450,079	2,517,776	2,608,130	11,568,376
	12	Adult Social Care affordability model including inflation - Housing 21	1,364,484	274,652	281,518	311,449	2,232,103
	13	Hospital discharge - fully funded from grant	1,325,436	0	0	0	1,325,436
	14	Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund	495,860	0	0	0	495,860
	15	Section 117 expenditure in Mental Health	150,063	61,967	64,446	67,024	343,500

Directorate	Ref	Details of Growth by outcome	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub	16	Client income – all care types	0	2,639,181	0	0	2,639,181
	17	Health income - Learning Disability Joint Funding tool	201,520	0	0	0	201,520
	18	Trix - online policy and procedures for Safeguarding	11,333	0	0	0	11,333
	19	Better Care finance system - ongoing licence costs	98,000	0	0	0	98,000
	20	Mosaic trainer post	39,000	0	0	0	39,000
	21	Additional social work capacity within Access Care Management Localities and Complex teams	353,257	298,910	0	0	652,167
	22	Co-production and consultation post	56,262	18,754	0	0	75,016
	23	Future arrangements for safeguarding	228,537	198,801	0	0	427,338
	24	Community Reablement and Technology - linked to saving OP16	644,008	644,008	0	0	1,288,016
	25	Revised Management Structure within Adult Social Care	443,069	49,230	0	0	492,299
	26	Financial Assessment and Charging Team (permanent structure)	316,952	107,327	0	0	424,279
	27	Client Money and Case Management Solution for Deputies and Appointees	20,000	0	0	0	20,000
	28	Mosaic Case Management solution development – introduction of Electronic Document Management system via Sharepoint and Access Community Gateway	47,500	0	0	0	47,500
	29	Carecubed investment for contract extension	50,000	0	0	0	50,000
	30A	Public Health - Residential Detox Placements	91,300	0	0	0	91,300
	30B	Public Health - Pay awards/ increments	50,000	0	0	0	50,000
	30C	Public Health - Inflation of 0-19 Healthy Child Programme	247,440	0	0	0	247,440
	30D	Public Health - Drug and Alcohol contribution to Family Safeguarding	100,000	0	0	0	100,000
	31	Public Health grant increase	0	275,901	261,300	264,745	801,946
	32	Supplementary Drugs and Alcohol - fully funded from grant	462,436	(462,436)	0	0	0
33	Intermediate Care Service (Increased demand and uplifts)	1,302,070	412,053	412,053	412,053	2,538,229	
34	Integrated Equipment Store	232,182	0	0	0	232,182	
35	Better Care Fund - Integrated Community Equipment Service rent/overheads, pay	232,972	229,456	229,456	229,456	921,340	
36	Occupational Therapists to support reviews post Intermediate Care Services discharge - linked to saving OP21	105,048	0	0	0	105,048	

Directorate	Ref	Details of Growth by outcome	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Economy, Environment & Communities	37	Leisure services income shortfall – fall out of investment as fee income recovers	(150,000)	0	0	0	(150,000)
	38	Coroners - contractual inflation	125,712	18,443	9,563	13,662	167,380
Total People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life			28,540,459	10,198,141	5,437,828	4,930,556	49,106,984
We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use							
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement	39	Reduction in housing benefit administration grant	46,148	43,840	40,000	40,000	169,988
	40	Increase in volume of Bank Charges for receiving online payments	111,122	0	0	0	111,122
	41	Reduction in Housing Benefit administration grant	50,000	0	0	0	50,000
	42	Costs of Bringing the Housing Register in house	225,000	0	0	0	225,000
	43	Increase in Bed and Breakfast costs	568,620	17,059	17,571	18,549	621,799
Total We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use			1,000,890	60,899	57,571	58,549	1,177,909
The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring							
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub	44	Policy & Strategy - Walsall 2040	10,000	0	0	0	10,000
	45	Policy & Strategy - running costs	36,000	0	0	0	36,000
Resources & Transformation	46	Cloud / Microsoft licences and infrastructure costs	55,000	750,400	31,520	0	836,920
	47	Additional capacity for Finance strategic partnering (linked to saving OP39)	276,039	0	0	0	276,039
	48	Digital and Technology - implement standardised addressing in two social care systems	30,000	0	0	0	30,000
	49	Human Resources - Organisational Leadership Development	100,000	(100,000)	0	0	0
	50	Payroll and Pensions - shortfall in income from schools	60,000	0	0	0	60,000
	51	Information Governance - shortfall in income from schools	62,000	0	0	0	62,000
	52	Digital and Technology - post within Operational Services to address increased demand in technology	0	120,780	0	0	120,780
	53	Human Resources Specialist Services - business administration support to Childrens	280,000	(280,000)	0	0	0
Central / Capital Financing	54	Capital financing / Minimum Revenue Provision review	1,202,650	(133,042)	600,000	600,000	2,269,608
	55	Revenue implications of capital programme	160,750	250,000	250,000	250,000	910,750
	56	Energy – fall out of investment	(600,000)	0	0	0	(600,000)

Directorate	Ref	Details of Growth by outcome	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Central / Capital Financing	57	Pay / pension provision	8,091,911	9,176,333	8,047,828	6,547,828	31,863,900
	58	WM Combined Authority contribution for Metro	232,802	705,458	242,207	250,000	1,430,467
	59	Cost of living / demand provision	0	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	4,500,000
Total The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring			9,997,152	11,989,929	10,671,555	9,147,828	41,806,464
Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential							
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement	60	Increase in demand for Home to school transport	986,977	1,133,977	800,000	643,407	3,564,361
	61	Reduction in traded services attendance income target due to schools directly employing their own staff in response to the new requirements of the school attendance procedures and bill	36,387	36,387	36,387	0	109,161
	62	Home to School Transport Staffing Resources	27,487	19,633	0	0	47,120
	63	Increase staffing costs in Education, Health, and Care Plan Assessment team to meet increased demand	72,333	51,667	124,000	0	248,000
	64	Educational Psychology service - staffing to meet increases in demand	871,971	119,281	133,627	199,818	1,324,698
Total Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential			1,995,155	1,360,945	1,094,014	843,225	5,293,340
Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere							
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement	65	Additional children in care demand / cost pressures	4,212,446	1,338,826	1,493,561	2,106,315	9,151,148
	66	Foster care / Special Guardianship Order / staying put allowances and proposed change to current fostering fees (linked to saving OP57/60)	714,500	191,800	197,000	84,000	1,187,300
	67	Increase in social workers pay (full year impact of 2022/23 investment)	12,000	0	0	0	12,000
	68	Removal of saving OP59 due to legislation changes - Development of locality partnership offer in Early Help.	888,396	0	0	0	888,396
	69	Young Carers Service	24,058	17,184	0	0	41,242
	70	Ongoing costs for wrap around support (linked to saving OP64)	350,000	0	0	0	350,000
	71	Legal Fees	100,000	0	0	0	100,000
	72	Transport Costs for social care	200,000	0	0	0	200,000
	73	Additional Head of Service post (linked to saving OP64)	110,948	0	0	0	110,948
	74	Additional Children and Family Officer posts in Corporate Parenting (linked to saving OP62)	121,173	0	0	0	121,173
	75	Recruitment and Retention Pressures	271,948	0	0	0	271,948

Directorate	Ref	Details of Growth by outcome	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement	76	Placement costs - Inflationary increases for external framework placements	4,706,576	3,671,661	3,929,714	4,008,308	16,316,259
	77	Increase birthday/ festive payments to Department for Education guidance for Special Guardianship Orders, fostering, connected care	31,000	0	0	0	31,000
	78	Kinship carers - remove allowance age cap, pay all carers birthday, holiday, and festive allowances, and remove means testing	294,335	0	0	0	294,335
	79	Revenue costs for new internal residential home (linked to saving OP63)	0	671,859	0	0	671,859
	80	Supported accommodation legislation post - fully funded from grant	37,355	0	0	0	37,355
	81	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) post - fully funded from grant	21,000	0	0	0	21,000
Total Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere			12,095,735	5,891,330	5,620,275	6,198,623	29,805,963
The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough							
Economy, Environment & Communities	82	Contractual inflation - Household Waste Recycling Centre haulage and management	319,578	66,701	34,586	49,408	470,273
	83	Increase in vehicle fuel costs	(125,000)	(75,000)	0	0	(200,000)
	84	Agency for domestic and garden waste	263,904	70,502	74,027	74,027	482,460
	85	Commercial Implementation Manager	89,000	0	0	0	89,000
	86	Under recovery of licensing income	72,643	0	0	0	72,643
	87	Environmental Health posts	95,928	0	0	0	95,928
	88	Assure Computer System Maintenance Support	11,750	0	0	0	11,750
	89	Enforcement of fly tipping, litter dropping, cigarette dropping etc.	50,000	0	0	0	50,000
	90	Increase of Community Protection Enforcement Officers	197,872	0	0	0	197,872
	91	Town Centre Guardians x 4	114,043	0	0	0	114,043
	92	Removal of 2023/24 saving - Rewilding of all urban grassed areas - to manage public grassed open spaces and verges for biodiversity rather than visual appearance. Most areas would only receive one cut per year; however, pitches, visibility splays, paths and edges would be cut more	352,348	0	0	0	352,348
	93	Removal of 2023/24 saving - Increase recycling rates and reduce contamination	382,523	0	0	0	382,523
	94	Removal of 2023/24 saving - Residential garden waste disposal	30,000	0	0	0	30,000

Directorate	Ref	Details of Growth by outcome	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Economy, Environment & Communities	95	Contractual inflation – Energy from waste, garden waste, co-mingled waste, landfill tax, vehicle hire, management of markets	1,140,131	279,386	175,361	223,372	1,818,249
	96	Reintroduce a youth team into the community	100,000	0	0	0	100,000
	97	To support healthy spaces activities	50,000	0	0	0	50,000
Total The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough			3,144,720	341,589	283,974	346,807	4,117,089
Total Growth and investment			57,688,395	30,078,450	23,179,254	21,679,997	132,626,096

Investment Summary by Outcome

Outcome	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place	614,284	235,617	14,037	154,409	1,018,347
People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home	300,000	0	0	0	300,000
People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life	28,540,459	10,198,141	5,437,828	4,930,556	49,106,984
We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use	1,000,890	60,899	57,571	58,549	1,177,909
The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring	9,997,152	11,989,929	10,671,555	9,147,828	41,806,464
Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential	1,995,155	1,360,945	1,094,014	843,225	5,293,340
Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere	12,095,735	5,891,330	5,620,275	6,198,623	29,805,963
The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough	3,144,720	341,589	283,974	346,807	4,117,089
Total	57,688,395	30,078,450	23,179,254	21,679,997	132,626,096

Investment Summary by Directorate

Directorate	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Adult Social Care, Public Health, and Hub	28,610,747	10,179,698	5,428,265	4,916,894	49,135,604
Children's Services and Customer Engagement:					
- Children's Services	14,090,890	7,252,275	6,714,289	7,041,849	35,099,303
- Customer Engagement	1,300,890	60,899	57,571	58,549	1,477,909
Economy, Environment and Communities	3,734,716	595,649	307,574	514,878	5,152,816
Resources and Transformation	863,039	491,180	31,520	0	1,385,739
Central / Capital Financing	9,088,113	11,498,749	10,640,035	9,147,828	40,374,725
Total	57,688,395	30,078,450	23,179,254	21,679,997	132,626,096

Appendix 2 – Benefits Realisation (Savings) for Proud activity by Outcome 2024/25 to 2027/28

A: Summary of Policy Proposals by Outcome 2024/25 – 2027/28

Directorate	Ref No	Detail of Policy Proposals by Outcome	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home							
People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life							
Economy, Environment & Communities	P1	Leisure health checks based on 5% forecast take up	(5,125)	(20,125)	0	0	(25,250)
		Leisure health checks - linked Investment (one off) - Tanita Body Composition Scale purchase, 12 months licence, IT equipment and marketing	40,000	(40,000)	0	0	0
	P2	Registrars – introduction of charges for change of name deeds	(3,000)	0	0	0	(3,000)
Total People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life			31,875	(60,125)	0	0	(28,250)
We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use							
Economy, Environment & Communities	P3	Arts and Events income - to introduce new online shop sales and ticketing	(15,000)	(10,000)	(25,000)	(25,000)	(75,000)
Total We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use			(15,000)	(10,000)	(25,000)	(25,000)	(75,000)
The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough							
Economy, Environment & Communities	P4	Street lighting dimming and trimming during the evening	(160,000)	0	0	0	(160,000)
	P5	Cease provision of Christmas lights	(40,000)	0	0	0	(40,000)
	P6	Closure of Fryers Road and Merchants Way Household Waste Recycling Centres for 1 day (7 to 6) - saving on contract spend	(150,000)	0	0	0	(150,000)
Total The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough			(350,000)	0	0	0	(350,000)
Total Policy Proposals			(333,125)	(70,125)	(25,000)	(25,000)	(453,250)

B: Summary of Operational Proposals by Outcome 2024/25 – 2027/28

Directorate	Ref No	Detail of Operational Proposals by Outcome	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Supporting a dynamic, resilient, and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP1	Street lighting energy savings	(263,000)	0	0	0	(263,000)
	OP2	Income from Enterprise Zone due to historic business rates	(147,000)	0	0	0	(147,000)
	OP3	Arena restructure	(6,747)	0	0	0	(6,747)
	OP4	Increase On Street Parking charges	(20,000)	0	0	0	(20,000)
	OP5	Increase Off Street Parking charges	(55,000)	0	0	0	(55,000)
	OP6	Capitalisation of highways works	(200,000)	0	0	0	(200,000)
	OP7	Traffic enforcement income model	(25,000)	0	0	0	(25,000)
	OP8	Funding of Building Control officer posts from Local Authority Building Control funds for 1 year only	(86,000)	86,000	0	0	0
	OP9	One off use of Biodiversity Net Gain grant allocation (linked to investment 6 for new Ecology officer post)	(10,000)	10,000	0	0	0
Total Supporting a dynamic, resilient, and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place			(812,747)	96,000	0	0	(716,747)
Education, training, and skills enable people to contribute to their community and our economy							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP10	Libraries partnership with voluntary sector	(223,446)	0	0	0	(223,446)
	OP11	Capitalise Full Book fund	(145,000)	0	0	0	(145,000)
Total Education, training and skills enable people to contribute to their community and our economy			(368,446)	0	0	0	(368,446)
People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP12	Non-Statutory Training in Community and Partnerships	(34,238)	0	0	0	(34,238)
	OP13	Income generation from penalty notices for littering	(30,000)	0	0	0	(30,000)
Total People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home			(64,238)	0	0	0	(64,238)
People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life							
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hubs	OP14	Demand - Develop and deliver additional support to Carers	(270,241)	0	0	0	(270,241)
	OP15	Shared lives	(142,812)	0	0	0	(142,812)
	OP16	Community reablement service – to prevent and delay long term care and support – subject to financial modelling and linked to investment 24	(1,147,248)	(2,535,965)	(2,586,685)	(2,638,418)	(8,908,316)

Directorate	Ref No	Detail of Operational Proposals by Outcome	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hubs	OP17	Market management of Learning Disability/Mental Health provider market – use of Care Cubed technology and dedicated commissioning resources to better calibrate and control the price of care provision – link to investment in commissioning capacity and requiring licence	(574,282)	(371,821)	(20,733)	(19,337)	(986,173)
	OP18	Additional client income based on net inflow of clients	(257,369)	(260,316)	(260,316)	(260,316)	(1,038,317)
	OP19	Deferred payments income	(265,344)	0	0	0	(265,344)
	OP20	Health Income - S117/ Continuing Health Care / Part Health Funded	(1,047,615)	(249,636)	(263,274)	(271,559)	(1,832,084)
	OP21	Review of high-cost domiciliary care packages post Intermediate Care Services discharge - linked to investment 36	(176,407)	(159,542)	0	0	(335,949)
	OP22	Contractual uplifts funded by Market Sustainability Improvement Fund	(57,621)	0	0	0	(57,621)
	OP23	Occupational Therapist funded from Disabled Facilities Grant capital	(52,000)	0	0	0	(52,000)
	OP24	Flex360 supporting in business-as-usual reviews - double to single handed care	(464,453)	0	0	0	(464,453)
	OP25	Increased Housing 21 community based / accommodation income	(89,000)	0	0	0	(89,000)
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP26	Review of coffee shop operations	(10,000)	(10,000)	0	0	(20,000)
	OP27	Above inflation increase to fees and charges	(20,000)	0	0	0	(20,000)
	OP28	Bereavement services new memorial garden at North Walsall Cemetery (linked capital investment of £480k required)	(55,000)	0	0	0	(55,000)
	OP29	Leisure personal training	(8,400)	0	0	0	(8,400)
	OP30	Leisure commercial courses	(4,000)	0	0	0	(4,000)
	OP31	Leisure programme review	(15,000)	0	0	0	(15,000)
	OP32	Active Living Centres income generation	(180,000)	180,000	0	0	0
	OP33	Commercialisation of services – potential to develop services to be self-funding	(47,000)	(1,410)	(1,452)	0	(49,862)
OP34	Fees and charges directorate wide	(318,284)	0	0	0	(318,284)	
Total People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life			(5,202,076)	(3,408,690)	(3,132,460)	(3,189,630)	(14,932,856)
We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use							
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement	OP35	Explore full cost recovery for administration of Energy Company Obligation (ECO) by fee charging	(50,000)	0	0	0	(50,000)

Directorate	Ref No	Detail of Operational Proposals by Outcome	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement	OP36	50% mitigation of Bed and Breakfast costs - increase Temporary Accommodation provision	(383,917)	(209,235)	(221,444)	(24,438)	(839,034)
	Total We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use			(433,917)	(209,235)	(221,444)	(24,438)
The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring							
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hubs	OP37	Removal of vacant posts within the Policy & Strategy Hub	(48,703)	0	0	0	(48,703)
	OP38	Service Desk 9-5	(25,000)	0	0	0	(25,000)
Resources & Transformation	OP39	Reduction in Finance Business Partner capacity aligned to further efficiencies to then fund new investment required at the strategic Finance Business Partner level as per Enabling Support Services blueprint - linked to investment 47	(276,039)	0	0	0	(276,039)
	OP40	Renegotiate Wide Area Network contract	(30,000)	0	0	0	(30,000)
	OP41	Replace Evolutive with in house system	(10,000)	0	0	0	(10,000)
	OP42	Stop using Microsoft Office	(15,000)	0	0	0	(15,000)
	OP43	Retire Mayrise system	0	(40,000)	0	0	(40,000)
	OP44	Replace ParkMap with Geospatial Product Suite	(2,149)	0	0	0	(2,149)
	OP45	Review of courier costs of equipment to new starters	(50,000)	0	0	0	(50,000)
	OP46	Digital and Technology - reduction in Supplies and Services (servers moving to cloud)	(100,000)	0	0	0	(100,000)
	OP47	Insurance renewal contract	(200,000)	0	0	0	(200,000)
	OP48	Early Payment Supplier Programme	(60,000)	0	0	0	(60,000)
	OP49	One public estate – income from partners	(250,000)	(250,000)	0	0	(500,000)
	OP50	Restructure of post room	(20,000)	0	0	0	(20,000)
	OP51	Council House / Town Hall events	(40,000)	0	0	0	(40,000)
	OP52	Potential further restructure of Corporate Landlord	(70,000)	0	0	0	(70,000)
	OP53	Energy reductions	(200,000)	(200,000)	0	0	(400,000)
Total The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring			(1,396,891)	(490,000)	0	0	(1,886,891)
Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential							
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement	OP54	Culture shift, training, and workforce - payback of Education, Health, and Care Plan investment	(50,000)	0	0	0	(50,000)
	OP55	Reduce headcount	(61,971)	0	0	0	(61,971)

Directorate	Ref No	Detail of Operational Proposals by Outcome	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement	OP56	Reduction in home to school transport investment	(145,000)	0	0	0	(145,000)
	Total Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential		(256,971)	0	0	0	(256,971)
Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere							
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement	OP57	Further Recruitment and Retention of internal Foster Carers - linked to investment 66	(600,000)	(600,000)	(600,000)	0	(1,800,000)
	OP58	Specialist Foster Placements	(244,000)	(244,000)	(244,000)	0	(732,000)
	OP59	Restructure of 'change grow live' following contract bought in house. Investment 68 identified to remove.	(888,396)	0	0	0	(888,396)
	OP60	Further recruitment and retention of internal foster carers into 2027/28 - linked to investment 66	0	0	0	(133,905)	(133,905)
	OP61	Full year impact of new internal residential homes	(467,400)	0	0	0	(467,400)
	OP62	Extend the Family Safeguarding programme into Corporate Parenting - linked to investment 74	(859,866)	(1,618,823)	(1,618,823)	(1,618,823)	(5,716,335)
	OP63	Placement sufficiency – opportunity to open further residential homes from 2025/26 - £600k capital investment in pipeline to support this - linked to investment 79	0	(678,054)	(339,027)	0	(1,017,081)
	OP64	Continued focus on placement step downs - linked to investment 70/73	(514,984)	(439,174)	0	0	(954,158)
	OP65	Adolescent Service - Early Help	(715,238)	(1,724,981)	(1,724,981)	(1,724,981)	(5,890,181)
		Adolescent Service - Early Help (Linked investment)	402,657	19,620	TBC	TBC	422,277
Total Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere		(3,887,227)	(5,285,412)	(4,526,831)	(3,477,709)	(17,177,179)	
The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP66	Additional Trade Waste Income	(68,350)	0	0	0	(68,350)
	OP67	Capitalisation of highways mtnce potholes to replace undeliverable 2023/24 saving	(200,000)	0	0	0	(200,000)
	OP68	Increase parking penalty notices income target to reflect demand	(20,000)	0	0	0	(20,000)
	OP69	Other waste disposal - (e.g., grey bin, plasterboard, textiles)	(280,000)	0	0	0	(280,000)
	OP70	W2R (Waste to Recycling) reconciliation credit	(150,000)	0	0	0	(150,000)
	OP71	Trade waste increase in income	(100,000)	0	0	0	(100,000)

Directorate	Ref No	Detail of Operational Proposals by Outcome	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP72	Income generation - full cost recovery of penalty notices for fly tipping	(5,000)	0	0	0	(5,000)
		Total The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough	(823,350)	0	0	0	(823,350)
Total Operational Proposals			(13,245,863)	(9,297,337)	(7,880,735)	(6,691,777)	(37,115,712)

Total Savings Proposals	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
A - Policy Proposals	(333,125)	(70,125)	(25,000)	(25,000)	(453,250)
B - Operational Proposals	(13,245,863)	(9,297,337)	(7,880,735)	(6,691,777)	(37,115,712)
Total Savings Proposals	(13,578,988)	(9,367,462)	(7,905,735)	(6,716,777)	(37,568,962)

Savings Proposals Summary by Outcome

Outcome	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Supporting a dynamic, resilient, and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place	(812,747)	96,000	0	0	(716,747)
Education, training, and skills enable people to contribute to their community and our economy	(368,446)	0	0	0	(368,446)
People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home	(64,238)	0	0	0	(64,238)
People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life	(5,170,201)	(3,468,815)	(3,132,460)	(3,189,630)	(14,961,106)
We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use	(448,917)	(219,235)	(246,444)	(49,438)	(964,034)
The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring	(1,396,891)	(490,000)	0	0	(1,886,891)
Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential	(256,971)	0	0	0	(256,971)
Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere	(3,887,227)	(5,285,412)	(4,526,831)	(3,477,709)	(17,177,179)
Our communities will be more resilient and supportive of each other	0	0	0	0	0
The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough	(1,173,350)	0	0	0	(1,173,350)
Total Savings Proposals	(13,578,988)	(9,367,462)	(7,905,735)	(6,716,777)	(37,568,962)

Savings Proposals Summary by Directorate

Directorate	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Adult Social Care and Public Health	(4,593,095)	(3,577,280)	(3,131,008)	(3,189,630)	(14,491,013)
Children's Services and Customer Engagement:					
- Children's Services	(4,144,198)	(5,285,412)	(4,526,831)	(3,477,709)	(17,434,150)
- Customer Engagement	(433,917)	(209,235)	(221,444)	(24,438)	(889,034)
Economy, Environment and Communities	(3,059,590)	194,465	(26,452)	(25,000)	(2,916,577)
Resources and Transformation	(1,348,188)	(490,000)	0	0	(1,838,188)
Central	0	0	0	0	0
Total Savings Proposals	(13,578,988)	(9,367,462)	(7,905,735)	(6,716,777)	(37,568,962)

Appendix 3 – Draft Capital Programme by Outcome 2024/25 to 2027/28 – Council Funded Schemes

A: Rolling Programme Schemes

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place							
Economy, Environment & Communities	Traffic Signals Infrastructure	The council has a statutory duty to maintain all its traffic signal infrastructure. This programme of planned pedestrian crossing replacements will ensure the safe and efficient movement of pedestrians across the borough (Traffic Management Act 2004). Also supports delivery of the council's carbon reduction targets.	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	800,000
	Provision of Community Dropped Crossings	These are dropped kerbs at strategic points along footways which permit access for wheelchairs, pushchairs, mobility scooters etc. to cross roads. The investment will allow the council to provide a rolling programme of community crossing points.	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	80,000
	Highways Maintenance Programme	As Highway Authority the council has a legal responsibility to maintain the highway network to avoid a deterioration of our roads, increasing the likelihood of accidents.	2,800,000	2,800,000	2,800,000	2,800,000	11,200,000
Total Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place			3,020,000	3,020,000	3,020,000	3,020,000	12,080,000
People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home							
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement	Aids and Adaptations / Preventative Adaptations/ Supporting Independence	This project directly supports the council's: 1. Statutory requirement to provide Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs) this includes enabling the council to provide a continuous service rather than as some councils do in terms of stock-piling enquiries till new grant allocations are made to them. 2. Provision of maintenance of lifts and hoists. 3. Minor adaptation works. 4. Domestic electrical safety.	412,000	412,000	412,000	412,000	1,648,000
	Health Through Warmth - Tackling Fuel Poverty	To help provide a safety net for those who cannot access other funding sources and is available as a loan charged on the individuals' property that is repaid upon sale or relevant transfer of their home. For this sum per year, it could offer 28 new boiler systems and 25 boiler repairs. Also helps secure continued investment from external agencies in tackling fuel poverty and excess winter deaths in the borough.	10,000	140,000	75,000	75,000	300,000
Total People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home			422,000	552,000	487,000	487,000	1,948,000

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life							
Economy, Environment & Communities	Memorial Safety Management in Cemeteries	The continued inspection and making safe of memorials in Walsall cemeteries and to discharge the council's duty of care within the cemeteries. Increased safety of memorials benefits the residents of Walsall by delivering a safer environment within Walsall cemeteries.	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	80,000
Council Wide	Funding to support essential works including health and safety, and other projects that cannot be programmed at start of year	1: Asbestos removal - the authority is required by legislation to manage asbestos within its properties and to remove to comply with health & safety legislation. 2: Statutory testing of gas and electrical systems in buildings. 3: Control of Legionella - statutory requirement to test all water systems and undertake upgrades and improvements as required. 4: Fire Risk Assessment - statutory requirement to ensure compliance with health & safety. 5: Demolition of redundant buildings to provide saleable assets and increase market value of sites. 6: General repair & maintenance of buildings, historic buildings, aiding relocations. 7: Self-insured property damage – insurance excess. 8: Risk Management - unforeseeable events.	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	4,000,000
Total People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life			1,020,000	1,020,000	1,020,000	1,020,000	4,080,000
The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough							
Economy, Environment & Communities	Promotion of Community Health and Safety	Ongoing funding of road safety schemes, to address local community concerns. In supporting the delivery of these local schemes, it is possible to improve local quality of life and safety creating safer communities.	120,000	120,000	120,000	120,000	480,000
Total The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough			120,000	120,000	120,000	120,000	480,000
Total Rolling Programme Schemes			4,582,000	4,712,000	4,647,000	4,647,000	18,588,000

B: Prior Year Approval Schemes

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place							
Economy, Environment & Communities	Enterprise Zones	Required for the Council to cash-flow borrowing costs associated with capital investment into the Enterprise Zone. Financial modelling forecasts that these costs are expected to be recovered from future business rates generated from within the zone, although the Black Country LEP are the decision-making body in relation to where business rates within the zone are invested. Therefore, on the basis that the BCLEP approve that costs on Walsall sites can be recovered through the business rates mechanism, then the Council will only be required to cash-flow these costs.	1,099,612	0	0	0	1,099,612
	Future High Streets Fund	To invest in Walsall to deliver a much-needed boost to our high street at this challenging time (External funding announced by MHCLG (now DLUHC – Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities) on 26 December 2020.). The additional £4.49m has been added from previously reports for the refurbishment of the Saddlers Centre including the transformation of the public realm area from the centre to the bus station with additional works to the train station concourse. This will be part of the transformative investment in Walsall Town Centre around the rail and bus stations. £4.49m increase - £3.471m in 2024/25, £1.02m in 2025/26.	10,022,220	13,613,723	975,057	0	24,611,000
	Yorks Bridge (Top Up)	Yorks Bridge is currently the subject of a 7.5 tonne weight limit. Replacement scheme funded using council capital funding and the Department for Transport Maintenance Block.	1,500,000	0	0	0	1,500,000
	Other schemes carried forward from previous years requiring completion	The Development Team structure is currently a Team Leader and 4 officers. Capitalising posts will enable further capacity to be introduced to the team to support delivery of the pipeline.	327,649	327,649	327,649	327,649	1,310,596
Resources and Transformation	Towns Deal	In 2021/22, Walsall and Bloxwich were successful in being awarded £21.3m from DLUHC for each town. Working with the Town Deal Board and partners, a project confirmation table has been submitted for each project, with an underwriting requirement from the Council of £5.48m as the Council's share of the shortfall compared to the awarded allocation.	0	0	0	0	0
		Walsall Towns Deal - council contribution.	0	1,779,600	0	0	1,779,600
		Bloxwich Towns Deal - council contribution.	0	3,700,000	0	0	3,700,000

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Resources and Transformation	Other schemes carried forward from previous years requiring completion	Car Park Surfacing works, Electric Vehicle charging, Changing Places, and toilets plus further capital works to units during/post connected gateway scheme.	350,000	150,000	150,000	0	650,000
Total Supporting a dynamic, resilient, and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place			13,299,481	19,570,972	1,452,706	327,649	34,650,808
People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life							
Economy, Environment & Communities	Children's Play Equipment	Installation of 6 new outdoor gyms and the improvement of 13 main play sites at a total cost of £1.644m to enhance the quality of play and fitness provision for young people and adults. This will be funded from S106 monies (£229k) and £1.07m council funded and seek to find the remaining fund externally. Continuation of a 2023/24 approved scheme.	524,886	0	0	0	524,886
Total People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life			524,886	0	0	0	524,886
The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring							
Resources and Transformation	Replacement of 'tablet' technology	A 'tablet replacement rollout' programme. Allocation of £2.25m approved in 2022/23. Further allocation of £2.25m rephased from 2023/24 to 2024/25 & 2025/26	1,125,000	1,125,000	900,000	900,000	4,050,000
	Card payments, Digital Website	To ensure the council remains compliant and allows for citizens to pay for services online.	100,000	0	0	0	100,000
	Konica multi-functional device re-tender	Konica multi-functional device contract expires 23/24; options to extend the contract. Following the extension, a full tender will be required during 2025/26 and devices will need to be replaced in 2026/27. A resource will be required to manage the device replacement programme.	0	0	0	50,000	50,000
	Archiving of Systems moving to Customer Access Management being retired	Provision for archiving either systems or data within systems as and when they are retired where third party solutions are required.	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	400,000
	Capitalisation of Capital Finance Team	Capitalisation of the team to enhance capital planning, financing and strengthen programme delivery.	261,000	261,000	261,000	261,000	1,044,000

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Resources and Transformation	Digital and Technology Service (DaTS) Staffing Capitalisation	DaTS will grow the internal team and knowledge to deliver capital projects which will reduce external consultants moving forward.	654,854	654,854	0	0	1,309,708
	Android Replacement programme	These devices will need to be replaced every 2-3 years as the versions of android become unsupported (an android replacement carried out in 2022/23).	200,000	0	0	0	200,000
	Data Back-up/Security replacement & Cloud Data back up	The current on-premise tape back-up solution will be end of life in 2024/25 - a replacement solution will be required to ensure that data is secured in line with the council's retention policy and to also ensure that it can be recovered should there be a disaster.	0	450,000	0	0	450,000
	WiFi Access Points and Licences	WiFi access points and associated licences have a 4-year lifespan in which they are compliant with PSN standards. In order to retain the council's PSN certification the Access Points and Licences will need to be replaced on a 3-4 yearly basis.	0	80,000	0	0	80,000
	Chip & Pin Devices	Chip & Pin Devices and associated licences have a 4-year life span in which they are compliant with PCI standards. In order to retain the council's PCI Compliance, the Chip & Pin Devices and Licences will need to be replaced on a 3-4 yearly basis.	0	30,000	0	0	30,000
	Other schemes carried forward from previous years requiring completion	Civic Centre Heating	896,328	250,000	0	0	1,146,328
		Council House General Heating	1,923,560	250,000	0	0	2,173,560
Central	Minor capital schemes <£100k	To fund minor capital schemes.	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	2,000,000
Total The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring			5,760,742	3,700,854	1,761,000	1,811,000	13,033,596
Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential							
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement	School Estate Condition Survey	Ongoing provision to cover school conditions.	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	1,000,000
	School Temporary Classrooms	Ongoing provision for improving / replacing permanent mobile classrooms when they reach a state of disrepair. This has been held corporately to fund emergency costs arising.	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	1,000,000
Total Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential			500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	2,000,000

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough							
Economy, Environment & Communities	Waste Management Strategy	Strategic acquisition of property to support the future delivery of the council's waste management strategies.	5,471,653	0	0	0	5,471,653
	Capitalisation of wheeled bin stock	Linked to revenue savings option. Wheeled bin stock capitalisation	180,000	180,000	180,000	180,000	720,000
Total The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough			5,651,653	180,000	180,000	180,000	6,191,653
Total Prior Year Approval Schemes			25,736,762	23,951,826	3,893,706	2,818,649	56,400,943

C: Development Investment

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place							
Council Wide	Development investment	Funding for development investment opportunities. This to include additional match funding costs if required to support projects in planning / development, subject to approval of a full business case by Cabinet to access these funds. Full list currently under review, which will be provided in the budget update report to Cabinet on 13 December 2023.	24,671,956	21,755,407	6,225,228	0	52,652,591
Economy, Environment and Communities	High Streets Fund - further match funding	This project was approved by Cabinet 21 April 2021 - To part match fund external/council funds to invest in Walsall to deliver a much-needed boost to our high street. Originally £3,727,171 in 2024/25 and £1,067,476 in 2025/26. Rephased to 2026/27.	0	0	5,026,928	83,072	5,110,000
	Willenhall Masterplan	Willenhall Garden City Phase 1 is part of a housing-led regeneration programme with public sector intervention in land assembly and gap funding required to support private sector delivery of new homes.	0	2,546,574	0	0	2,546,574
Total Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place			24,671,956	24,301,981	11,252,156	83,072	60,309,165
People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life							
Economy, Environment and Communities	Active Public Places	To deliver the full project scope of public realm works, canal bridge and basin works (approved by Cabinet)	1,000,000	744,000	0	0	1,744,000
Total People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life			1,000,000	744,000	0	0	1,744,000

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere							
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement	Children in care Foster Care refurbishment programme	This funding is provided to enable foster carers and special guardians for children in care by Walsall to enlarge their homes or in some circumstances, to obtain an alternative larger home.	150,000	0	0	0	150,000
Total Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere			150,000	0	0	0	150,000
The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough							
Economy, Environment and Communities	HWRC station - Middlemore Lane	This is additional budget required to cover the uncontrollable increased inflationary / construction pressures on the existing project. To provide a new Waste Transfer Station (WTS) and large Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) at Middlemore Lane in Aldridge.	17,375,391	0	0	0	17,375,391
Total The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough			17,375,391	0	0	0	17,375,391
Total Development Investment			43,197,347	25,045,981	11,252,156	83,072	79,578,556

D: New Capital Schemes

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life							
Economy, Environment & Communities	Streetly Crematorium-Cremator Reline (No.3)	Capital for the relining of the 3rd Cremator at Streetly Crematorium. Other 2 cremators have been relined last year. If not repaired this creates a service risk as should either of the 2 cremators require repairs or not be working, this affects the number of services which could be offered daily. This would cause a possible delay in cremations and cause a pressure on environmental responsibilities as well as impacting staff who would incur overtime to cover the additional duties and time required.	54,000	0	0	0	54,000
	Enhancement of Darlaston Pool	Implement new water features to improve teaching pool facilities and attract new business. 3-year payback	45,000	0	0	0	45,000
Total People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life			99,000	0	0	0	99,000

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place							
Economy, Environment & Communities	Capitalisation of Reactive Highways maintenance - Pothole Funding	Capitalisation of Reactive Highways maintenance- Pothole Funding	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	800,000
	Street Lighting Inspections	Capitalisation of electrical Inspections of Street Lighting - Health and Safety	54,468	62,469	35,793	63,091	215,821
Total Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place			254,468	262,469	235,793	263,091	1,015,821
The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring							
Economy, Environment & Communities	Capitalisation of Library Book Fund	Capitalisation of Library Book Fund	290,000	145,000	145,000	145,000	725,000
	Replacement of PCs in Libraries	Replacement of 153 PCs in Libraries	205,000	0	0	0	205,000
Resources and Transformation	Maintaining a Safe & Secure Environment (rolling programme)	Continuation of existing scheme Maintaining a Safe & Secure Environment. Not all hardware has a warranty/support & maintenance agreement in place - it is more cost effective to replace the equipment should it fail - some equipment will run for 10+ years without incident, therefore having a support/warranty agreement in place is not cost effective. This scheme also funds critical work that needs to take place within the Council's data centre environments for example additional cooling units, additional door security, unforeseen problems i.e. suppliers unexpectedly declaring components end of life or unforeseen incompatibilities between components i.e. something new won't work with something old without additional intervention/replacement.	150,000	150,000	200,000	200,000	700,000
	Digital and Technology Service (DaTS) Staffing Capitalisation	DaTS will grow the internal team and knowledge to deliver capital projects which will reduce external consultants moving forward.	642,144	642,144	1,342,144	0	2,626,432
Adult Social Care, Public Health	Mosaic Case Management Solution	Access Community Gateway - self assessment; social care reforms tool to support compliancy areas linked to care cap; self-funders; statements	68,425	0	0	0	68,425
Total The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring			1,355,569	937,144	1,687,144	345,000	4,324,857
Total New Capital Programme requests			1,709,037	1,199,613	1,922,937	608,091	5,439,678
Total Draft Capital Programme – Council Funded			75,225,146	54,909,420	21,715,799	8,156,812	160,007,177

Appendix 4 – Draft Capital Programme by Outcome 2024/25 to 2027/28 – External Funded Schemes

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place							
Economy, Environment & Communities	High Streets Fund	To invest in Walsall to deliver a much-needed boost to our high street at this challenging time, as announced by MHCLG (now Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities - DLUHC) on 26 December 2020.	1,711,813	0	0	0	1,711,813
	LTP Highway Maintenance Programme	This capital funding, known as the maintenance block, is distributed by the Integrated Transport Authority (ITA). As the Highway Authority we have an extremely high-profile duty to maintain our highway network. This money is provided by the Department for Transport via the ITA with the condition that it should be spent on the classified road network. Includes allocation for potholes and bridge strengthening.	3,568,700	3,568,700	3,568,700	3,568,700	14,274,800
	Local Network Improvement Plan	The Government provides each locality with grant funding to help implement the Local Transport Plan in their area. The grant is used for the implementation of small-scale capital schemes; development of major capital schemes and to part fund major schemes implementation costs. The programme is designed to address road safety issues, progress the Council's major scheme aspirations; and resource the required 'local contributions' to approved major schemes. (Department for Transport / West Midlands ITA).	1,563,100	1,563,100	1,563,100	1,563,100	6,252,400
	Levelling Up Fund	£20 million announced on 19 January 2022 by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to kickstart the delivery of over 500 new homes connecting local people in Willenhall to jobs, parks, and new rail station.	12,896,442	0	0	0	12,896,442
	Levelling Up Fund	£20 million announced on 19 January 2022 by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to kickstart the delivery of over 500 new homes connecting local people in Willenhall to jobs, parks, and new rail station.	4,338,024	0	0	0	4,338,024
	Levelling Up Fund	£3.2m of LPIF Funding as part-funding for the Willenhall Masterplan project to to kickstart the delivery of over 500 new homes connecting local people in Willenhall to jobs, parks, and new rail station.	3,200,000	0	0	0	3,200,000
	Other schemes carried forward from previous years requiring completion	Local Transport Plan - Yorks Bridge	387,962	0	0	0	387,962

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Resources and Transformation	Towns Deal	In 2021/22, Walsall and Bloxwich were successful in being awarded £21.3m from DLUHC for each town. A grant offer has been received, which has been accepted by the signing of a Heads of Terms. Working with the Town Deal Board and Partners, a Project Confirmation Table has been submitted for each project, with an underwriting requirement from the Council of £5.48m as the Council's share of the shortfall compared to the awarded allocation. This is subject to formal completion of a full business case for all of the projects.	0	0	0	0	0
		Walsall Towns Deal	1,076,399	11,891,369	0	0	12,967,768
		Bloxwich Towns Deal	7,841,367	7,076,781	0	0	14,918,148
	Other schemes carried forward from previous years requiring completion	Land & Property Investment Fund	3,111,000	60,682	0	0	3,171,682
Total Supporting a dynamic, resilient, and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place			39,694,807	24,160,632	5,131,800	5,131,800	74,119,038
People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home							
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement	Disabled Facilities Grant	This project directly supports the council's statutory requirement to provide disabled facility grants (DFGs). The project has a direct positive impact on the number and subsequent varied costs to the council from the increasing level of demand for home adaptations.	3,314,771	3,314,771	3,314,771	3,314,771	13,259,084
Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub	Integrated Community Equipment Store (ICES)	Supplies equipment to people with both a social care and a health need on an assessed needs basis. This is a pooled budget between the CCG and the council, this capital funding will be used to purchase this equipment which will enable people to return home or continue to remain at home. This now forms part of the Better Care Fund (BCF) for which the council is host. (Department of Health).	888,000	888,000	888,000	888,000	3,552,000
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement	Other schemes carried forward from previous years requiring completion	Purchase of Dispersed Temporary Accommodation	523,670	0	0	0	523,670
Total People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home			4,726,441	4,202,771	4,202,771	4,202,771	17,334,754

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring							
Resources and Transformation	Low Carbon Heating Project - Civic Centre / Town Hall / Council House	Low Carbon Heating Project funding (from BEIS -The Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy via Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme -Phase 3b) for Civic Centre/Town Hall/Council House for £3.6m for installation of the Air Source Heat pump and Solar PV.	3,271,750	0	0	0	3,271,750
Total The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring			3,271,750	0	0	0	3,271,750
Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential							
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement	Basic Need	Paid to Local Authorities to support the capital requirement for providing new pupil places by expanding existing maintained schools, free schools or academies & establishing new schools (Department for Education-DfE).	2,500,000	9,346,409	23,368,088	0	35,214,497
	Devolved Formula Capital	Received by the Local authority then allocated out to individual schools as per allocations defined by the DfE. It is intended to provide schools with capital funding for improvement to buildings and other facilities, including ICT, or capital repairs / refurbishments and minor works. (Department for Education).	510,228	510,228	510,228	510,228	2,040,912
	Capital Maintenance	Allocated to the Local Authority on an annual basis to improve and maintain the condition of the school estate (buildings and grounds). Investment is prioritised on keeping school buildings safe and in good working order by tackling poor building condition, building compliance, energy efficiency, and health and safety issues. (Department for Education).	3,195,000	2,285,000	8,862,791	3,888,380	18,231,171
	High Needs Provisional Capital allocation	High Needs Provisional Capital Allocation (HNPCA) funding is paid to Local authorities to support the capital requirement for providing new SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) pupil places by expanding/improving existing maintained schools, free schools, or academies. Confirmed Allocation for 2023/24.	2,867,030	2,867,030	13,884,142	4,365,293	23,983,495
Total Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential			9,072,258	15,008,667	46,625,249	8,763,901	79,470,075

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere							
Children, Education & Customer Engagement	Family hubs and Start for Life programme,	To support the implementation of the Family Hub and Start for Life Programme which is aimed at providing families with the integrated support they need to care for their children from conception, throughout early years and into the start of adulthood. The capital element of the grant will be used to purchase / improve current data records management systems linked to documenting outcomes of the programme initially and then may be required to purchase equipment needed to support the programme ongoing. Funding from Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care	64,250	0	0	0	64,250
Total Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere			64,250	0	0	0	64,250
The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough							
Economy, Environment & Communities	Walsall Urban Tree Challenge Fund	Working in partnership with Trees for Cities - a joint application was made to the Forestry Commission. The project will plant 360 extra heavy standard trees in wide verges or small open spaces. The grant covers 50% of the cost of tree purchase and 50% of maintenance costs.	15,734	0	0	0	15,734
Total The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough			15,734	0	0	0	15,734
Total Draft Capital Programme – External Funded			56,845,240	43,372,070	55,959,820	18,098,472	174,275,601

Summary Capital Programme	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Council Funded Schemes	75,225,146	54,909,420	21,715,799	8,156,812	160,007,177
External Funded Schemes	56,845,240	43,372,070	55,959,820	18,098,472	174,275,601
Total Draft Capital Programme	132,070,386	98,281,489	77,675,619	26,255,284	334,282,778

Draft Capital Programme by Outcome

Outcome	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Supporting a dynamic, resilient, and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place	80,940,712	71,316,053	21,092,455	8,825,612	182,174,832
Education, training, and skills enable people to contribute to their community and our economy	0	0	0	0	0
People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home	5,148,441	4,754,771	4,689,771	4,689,771	19,282,754
People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life	2,643,886	1,764,000	1,020,000	1,020,000	6,447,886
The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring	10,388,061	4,637,998	3,448,144	2,156,000	20,630,203
Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential	9,572,258	15,508,667	47,125,249	9,263,901	81,470,075
Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere	214,250	0	0	0	214,250
Our communities will be more resilient and supportive of each other	0	0	0	0	0
The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough	23,162,778	300,000	300,000	300,000	24,062,778
Total Capital Programme by Outcome (Council Funded Schemes)	132,070,386	98,281,489	77,675,619	26,255,284	334,282,778

Draft Capital Programme by Directorate

Directorate	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
Adult Social Care, Public Health, and Hub	956,425	888,000	888,000	888,000	3,620,425
Children's Services and Customer Engagement:					0
- Children's Services	9,786,508	15,508,667	47,125,249	9,263,901	81,684,325
- Customer Engagement	4,260,441	3,866,771	3,801,771	3,801,771	15,730,754
Economy, Environment and Communities	69,191,654	26,111,215	15,182,227	9,290,612	119,775,707
Resources and Transformation	21,703,402	28,651,430	2,953,144	1,511,000	54,818,976
Central / Capital Financing	26,171,956	23,255,407	7,725,228	1,500,000	58,652,591
Total	132,070,386	98,281,489	77,675,619	26,255,284	334,282,778

Cabinet – 18 October 2023

Corporate Financial Performance 2023/24

Portfolio: Councillor M. Bird – Leader of the Council

Related Portfolios: All

Service: Finance – council wide

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To report on the forecast corporate financial position for 2023/24, based on known and forecast pressures as at September 2023, and actions being taken to address this to ensure the council outturns on budget.

2. Summary

- 2.1 This report provides a summary position on the draft forecast revenue outturn for 2023/24 including significant demand and cost pressures, particularly within Adult Social Care and Children's Services, resulting in a forecast spend above budget of £18.35m prior to service mitigation actions identified to date of £3.81m and central mitigating actions of £10.82m, which reduces the overall position to a £3.72m overspend. Work continues to identify further actions to bring the position closer to the budget and ensure a balanced outturn is delivered by 31 March 2024.
- 2.2 In relation to the capital programme, the report includes a number of proposed amendments for approval as set out in section 4.15 of the report. The forecast outturn is predicted to be an underspend of £710k after the expected carry forward of £23.82m into 2024/25.
- 2.3 This report also sets out:
- Performance against an agreed set of financial health indicators, which are forecast to be achieved;
 - Performance against statutory and local prudential indicators, which are forecast to be achieved.

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 3.1 Note the forecast revenue spend above budget of £18.35m with services mitigating actions of £3.81m reducing this to £14.53m. A further £10.82m of central mitigating

actions have been identified reducing the overspend down further to £3.72m. The forecast overspend has reduced by £10.07m since the June position (month 3) reported to Cabinet on 19 July 2023, mainly due to:

- a further underspend of £2.08m in relation to capital financing,
- the use of central mitigating actions,
- a one off windfall income from business rates of £2.62m.
- This position also includes the use of the additional Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund grant allocation given in year of £2.18m as announced in July 2023.

- 3.2 Note that there are additionally high risks of £15.64m to the revenue forecast identified within services as set out in Appendix 2. These risks are actively being monitored and action is being taken to reduce / eliminate them.
- 3.3 Note the progress on savings approved for 2023/24 and the amendments as detailed in section 4.11 to 4.13 and the proposed use of earmarked reserves to mitigate these in 2023/24. Ongoing into 2024/25 these are expected to be fully delivered or replaced with alternative savings to ensure no financial impact.
- 3.4 Approve amendments to the capital programme as set out in section 4.15, including the request to increase highways maintenance by £700k in 2023/24.
- 3.5 Note that the forecast for the capital programme is a predicted underspend of £710k, after the expected carry forward of £23.82m into 2024/25, as set out in sections 4.16 and 4.17 and Appendix 6.
- 3.6 Approve the release of £2.89m from the development pool for the continuation of the Enabling Technology Programme, as set out in sections 4.19 to 4.23.
- 3.7 Approve borrowing of up to £6.50m to fund part of the Phoenix 10 funding package on the basis this sum will be reimbursed via retained business rates as approved by the Black Country Joint Committee at its meeting on 24 June 2020, as set out in sections 4.24 to 4.26.
- 3.8 Note financial health indicator performance as set out in sections 4.27 to 4.32 and Appendix 8.
- 3.9 Note the prudential indicators as set out in section 4.33 and Appendix 9.
- 3.10 Note the performance and demand data at Appendices 10 and 11 in relation to Adult and Children's Social Care Services.

4. Know – Context

- 4.1 The council is legally required to operate within a balanced budget, to operate within financial controls and to deliver approved budget savings. The cost-of-living impact and increases in demand are causing significant pressures, particularly in relation to the council's costs in relation to energy and supplies and contract uplifts and demand within Adult Social Care and Children's Services. Whilst the position is considered manageable for 2023/24, setting a balanced budget for 2024/25 will be challenging without a fairer Settlement from Government in relation to core funding.

Revenue Forecast 2023/24 - Service Pressures

- 4.2 Walsall Council has a good track record of managing financial pressures and action is being taken to continue to mitigate the current pressures in relation to the cost of living impact, on contracts / third party spend in particular, alongside extra ordinary increases in demand within Adult Social Care and Childrens Services. Where known and quantifiable, the financial impact of this is included within the forecast position. As a result of the pressures, mitigating actions continued to be instigated including services taking action to address them, use of appropriate earmarked reserves, etc.
- 4.3 The current council wide forecast shows a number of pressures which would lead to a potential overspend of c£18.35m against budget as summarised by directorate in Table 2. Total mitigating actions have been identified of £14.63m (Appendix 4) reducing the forecast overspend to £3.72m. The overall position has reduced by £10.07m on the June position of £13.80m reported to Cabinet on 19 July 2023. This includes additional Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund grant of £2.18m announced in July 2023, one off windfall income from business rates of £2.62m and a further underspend on capital financing of £2.08m.
- 4.4 A review of reserves has been undertaken by the Section 151 officer (S151 Officer) in relation to the position who has approved the release of £10.82m of reserves to reduce current pressures as set out in Table 1. These earmarked reserves were set aside as part of the 2023/34 budget setting process following risk assessment of the budget assumptions and horizon scanning potential scenarios in relation to demand and costs.

Table 1: Corporate Mitigating Actions	
Details	£m
Adult Social Care	
Fund red savings without mitigating actions (risk reserve)	2.13
Housing 21 inflation increase (cost of living reserve)	0.19
Increased costs from net inflow of new, deceased and ended clients moves (social care demand reserve)	2.34
Total Adult Social Care	4.66
Children's and Education	
Fund red savings without mitigating actions (risk reserve)	0.25
Increased demand multiple sibling groups (social care demand reserve)	0.31
Increased demand on remand placements (social care demand reserve)	0.68
Increased demand on independent fostering agencies placements (social care demand reserve)	0.38
Legal costs (mediation reserve)	0.10
Total Children's and Education	1.72
Customer Engagement	
Customer Access Management (CAM) delayed red saving (risk reserve)	1.29
Total Customer Engagement	1.29
Economy, Environment & Communities	
Fund remaining red savings without mitigating actions (risk reserve)	0.22
Total Economy, Environment & Communities	0.22
Central	
CAM delayed red saving (risk reserve)	2.93
Total Corporate Mitigating Actions	10.82

The following sections detail movements since the position last reported to Cabinet in July 2023 (June - month 3 position) with the full detail on full year forecast variances and actions to address these shown in Appendix 1 and Appendix 4.

4.5 Adults Social Care, Public Health and Hub - £4.95m increase in overspend from £7.46m to £12.41m after use of and transfers to reserves and mitigating actions.

- Reviews £1.98m - Net increase due to the impact of reviews on existing client placements – average 9.2% increase is being maintained;
- Inflow / Attrition £1.95m - Increase due to a net inflow of new, deceased and ended clients. This increase is a combined impact of new clients being placed at a higher average cost than originally budgeted and the number of expected deaths and ended placements being significantly lower than the budget;
- Continuation of trends £3.97m - based on 5 months of data and more informed intelligence, future projections now reflect the most up to date trends relating to client placement reviews and net inflow and outflow of service users. The forecast now assumes this trend will continue at the prevailing rate for the remainder of the financial year;
- Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF) (£2.18m) – Government recently announced a further £570m of MSIF across financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25. This is to address discharge delays, social care waiting times, low fee rates, and workforce pressures. This equates to an additional £2.18m for Walsall in 2023/24 which will be used to support demand led services across Adult Social Care in line with the grant conditions;
- Income (£920k) - additional client contribution and health income (including Section 117 and Continuing Healthcare) relating to care packages;
- Intermediate Care Services £610k – additional demand, increased spot purchase bed rates for Intermediate care pathways and a reduction in Integrated Care Board (ICB) Better Care Fund inflation allocation;
- Procurement (£170k) – movement of the service from Adult Social Care to Resources and Transformation;
- Other (£290k) – this includes an increase in housing 21 client contribution income, decrease in the bed debt provision, further under spend due to vacant posts and one-off mitigation for Public Health and Communications STP proposals.

4.6 Children's and Education - £1.35m increased overspend from £1.93m to £3.28m after use of and transfers to reserves and mitigating actions)

- £1.57m Children in care demand:
 - £40k increase in remand pressures primarily due to the postponement of court dates for multiple young people due to the complexity of the case at £131k, partially offset by an increase in the remand grant of (£96k);
 - £34k increase in the placement move pressure, fully offset by reserves;
 - £1.32m due to the increased net inflow / outflow of children and young people entering care since June, over and above budget. This is primarily due to an increased reliance on IFA's, external residential and mother & baby placements, in addition to an increasing number of sibling groups entering care;
 - £1.10m continuation of the increased net inflow / outflow trends seen to date for the remainder of the financial year. This pressure has been fully offset by reserves;
 - £180k linked to other demand led pressures including care leaver payments, section 17 accommodation, and placement price increases linked to complex cases.

- £90k increase in unachieved recruitment and retention saving due to delays in recruitment and extension of current agency staff.
- (£370k) reduction in the overall forecast following implementation of a directorate wide action plan;
- £60k other minor movements across the directorate.

The position in relation to Customer Engagement has not changed overall since June, a £1.19m overspend.

4.7 *Economy, Environment and Communities - (£350k) reduction in overspend from £550k to £200k after use of and transfers to reserves and mitigating actions*

- Environment – (£114k) decrease of road sweepers hire forecast and reduction in staffing forecast due to delay in recruitment of vacant posts;
- Leisure – (£206k) increase of Active Living Centres income forecast due to increased demand and increase prices;
- Commercial - £157k reduction of Cremation and Burial income forecast due to increased competition and fall in demand;
- Highways and Transportation – (£240k) (£87k) additional s38, fixed penalty notice, permit scheme and engineers assistants time income, (£133k) reduction of non-essential operational costs in year and (£16k) reduction in staffing due to delays in recruitment;
- Operations - £444k - £519k additional W2R inflation costs, £147k additional staffing costs and (£200k) capitalisation of costs in relation to Velocity patcher;
- Libraires – (£276k) - (£145k) capitalisation of costs in relation to book fund and (£143k) revised staffing forecast;
- Regulatory Services – (£108k) reduction in staffing forecast due to a delay in the recruitment of vacant posts and a reduction of operational costs in year.

4.8 *Resources and Transformation - (£210k) increased underspend from £250k to £470k after use of and transfers to reserves and mitigating actions*

- Patrol Administration £42k - £14k salaries, £14k supplies and services and £10k transport;
- Democratic Services £37k - £18k under recovery of schools admission appeal income and £20k overspend on supplies;
- Corporate Procurement £190k - interim management costs and agency costs covering vacant posts;
- Asset Management £32k - professional fees due to potential sale of properties;
- Digital and Technology Services £29k - £100k overspend on computer equipment offset by an underspend of (£46k) on agency and (£20k) underspend on training;
- Catering £22k - £194k overspend on supplies and service offset by (£203k) additional income;
- Post Room (£16k) – due to vacant posts;
- Building Services Manager (£51k) – (£163k) climate change levy offset by an overspend of £67k supplies and services and £55k professional fees;
- Finance (£71k) – (£256k) underspend on salaries offset by £86k under recovery of income from capital projects, £41k training, £38k agency and £15k supplies and services;
- Corporate Management Team (£77k) – (£222k) underspend on agency offset by £108k overspend on salaries and £32k recruitment expenses;
- Caretaking (£78k) – (£61k) underspend on salaries and (£28k) additional income;

- Information Governance (£113k) - (£73k) underspend on salaries due to vacancies and secondments (£39k) underspend on computer equipment and supplies;
- Payroll & Pensions (£167k) – (£114k) underspend on salaries due to change to capital funding and (£53k) additional income to realignment of budgets;
- Facilities Management (£39k) – budget realignments and staffing vacancy adjustments agreed with service.

4.9 Capital Financing and Central budgets – (£15.81m) reduction in overspend of £2.93m to an underspend of £10.81m)

- £2.66m one-off windfall income from business rates following the Valuation Office amendment to the rateable value of the Art Gallery and a further £250k underspend against the in-year budget as this is no longer required.
- £2.08m further underspend on capital financing budgets due to the impact of interest rates changes to investments and loans and rescheduling of the capital programme;
- £10.82m relating to the central mitigation actions to reduce the overall council position.

Table 2: Forecast revenue analysis 2023/24 by Directorate - September 2023

Directorate	Net Budget	Year-end forecast prior to transfer to / (from) earmarked reserves	Year-end variance to budget prior to transfer / (From) earmarked reserves	Use of earmarked reserves	Transfer to earmarked reserves	Year-end forecast prior to mitigating actions	Mitigating Actions	Year-end forecast including all mitigating actions	Movement since reported to Cabinet 19.07.2023
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adult Social Care and Public Health	73.67	91.92	18.25	(6.83)	2.74	14.16	(1.76)	12.40	4.95
Children's Services									
- Children's and Education	75.46	82.87	7.41	(4.01)	0.24	3.65	(0.37)	3.28	1.35
- Customer Engagement	3.17	5.52	2.35	(1.16)	0.00	1.19	0.00	1.19	0.00
Economy, Environment & Communities	36.70	44.38	7.68	(6.50)	0.69	1.88	(1.68)	0.20	(0.35)
Resources & Transformation	36.49	39.63	3.14	(5.55)	1.94	(0.46)	0.00	(0.46)	(0.21)
Capital Financing	24.66	17.45	(7.21)	(0.59)	5.72	(2.08)	0.00	(2.08)	(2.08)
Services & CF Position	250.14	281.80	31.65	(24.62)	11.34	18.33	(3.81)	14.52	3.66
Central budgets	(105.98)	(98.80)	7.18	(12.45)	5.28	0.02	(10.82)	(10.80)	(13.73)
Total council tax requirement	144.16	182.96	38.80	(37.07)	16.62	18.35	(14.63)	3.72	(10.07)

4.10 The year-end forecast includes the use of earmarked reserves of £37.07m and transfers to earmarked reserves of £16.63m, as detailed at Appendix 3. Earmarked reserves are created for specified purposes. These are all planned to be used, although the period over which they are to be used and the profiling of that use may vary. This results in projected closing earmarked reserves of £168.30m as shown in Table 3.

	Opening Balance 01/04/23	Transfers from Reserves	Transfers to Reserves	Movement	Closing Balance 31/03/24
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Treasury Reserves	23.63	(1.07)	5.72	4.65	28.28
Grant / Contributions received in advance	22.16	(7.96)	0.99	(6.97)	15.19
Improvement projects	33.52	(9.93)	2.28	(7.66)	25.86
Cost Pressures	21.66	(7.14)	0.00	(7.14)	14.53
Council Liabilities	51.18	(0.21)	7.64	7.42	58.61
Covid-19 grants	0.83	(0.32)	0.00	(0.32)	0.51
Public Finance Initiatives	18.01	(3.03)	0.00	(3.03)	14.98
Risk	10.65	(6.82)	0.00	(6.82)	3.83
Other	7.11	(0.59)	0.00	(0.59)	6.52
Total	188.75	(37.07)	16.62	(20.45)	168.30

Reserves are categorised for the purposes of reporting as follows:

- **Treasury reserves.** These reserves are to minimise the impact of interest rate changes and finance early redemption of loans to reduce the council's future interest exposure;
- **Grants / contributions received in advance.** This is where the council has received money in advance of the next accounting period or covers more than one accounting period. These amounts will be spent in line with the grant conditions;
- **Improvement projects.** These reserves are to finance service modernisation; specific projects such as pilot street cleansing initiatives, Cloud services, Oracle development, economic growth programme; and costs in relation to the council's transformation programme;
- **Cost pressures.** To include review of working practices including blended working, fluctuations in service demand such as in adult social care, crisis support and children in care;
- **Council liabilities.** These reserves cover expenditure where the council has a legal obligation to pay costs, such as equal pay claims and redundancies. In addition to these there are reserves for business rate appeals, pensions and insurance claims;
- **Covid-19 grants.** The carry forward of specific government grants to cover Covid pressures, including expanded retail relief for businesses;
- **Public Finance Initiatives.** Liabilities for our PFI's with Street Lighting and St Thomas More;
- **Risk.** To cover unforeseen risks in 2023/24 at the time the budget was set;

- **Other.** These reserves are to support a wide range of future costs such as partnership working with other external bodies.

Approved savings in 2023/24

- 4.11 The 2023/24 budget approved by Council on 23 February 2023 includes £15.71m of benefits realisation (savings) against Proud activity plus a further £7.55m of 2022/23 benefits approved to be carried forward for delivery in 2023/24, giving a total benefit figure of £23.26m to be achieved. Directors are required to ensure that service delivery plans are robustly implemented to fully deliver these in year.
- 4.12 There are currently £9.58m of benefits assessed as Red for delivery (at high risk of non-delivery), as shown in Appendix 5 along with the reason and identified service mitigating actions to date totalling £2.77m. The remaining £6.81m are proposed to be mitigated from use of the corporate risk reserve as detailed in Table 1 of this report.
- 4.13 Adult Social Care have reviewed the Red savings and propose to achieve the carers support saving of £240,934 by amalgamating it with saving OP90 which is currently overachieving. The two savings are linked to expenditure in the same area, therefore changes to carers support is likely to be one of the reasons for the overachievement. The amendments would mean the saving is fully achieved on an on-going basis and would reduce the value of high-risk savings by £241k to that reported in this report. This is an operational change and does not require any consultation or a further quality impact assessment completing. Cabinet are asked to note this change.

Current Saving Reference	Current Saving Description	Current Saving Value
OP10	Carers Support – develop and deliver additional support to carers	£240,934
TOTAL		
Amended Saving Reference	Amended Saving Description	Amended Saving Value
OP90	Efficiencies attributed to the review of existing clients through strength based practice and development of new Target Operating Model	£240,934
TOTAL		£240,934

General Reserves

- 4.14 Opening unallocated general reserves for 2023/24 are £18.70m. The medium-term financial framework (MTFF) requires that a prudent levels of reserves is maintained. This was set at no less than £16.12m for 2023/24. The MTFF also sets a minimum level of reserves beyond which any use must be reported to Council. This is currently set at £7.20m. The potential variance against budget of £3.72m after mitigating actions within this report would reduce available reserves to £14.98m which is likely to require some replenishment for 2024/25. Action is being taken to ensure this does not occur and officers are confident that the council will outturn close to budget.

Capital Programme 2023/24

- 4.15 The capital programme for 2023/24, as reported to Cabinet on 19 July 2023 was £134.75m. Table 3 summarises amendments made to date, resulting in a revised programme of £138.38m.

Table 3: Amendments to Capital Programme 2023/24	
Project	£m
Capital Programme 2023/24 per Cabinet 19 July 2023	134.75
Council Funded Resources	
Highways maintenance – funded from Pipeline Development *	0.70
Oak Park Active Living Centre conversion of small office space for commercial reasons – funded from Pipeline Development	0.35
Old Square public realm – funded from Pipeline Development	0.22
Pipeline Development	(1.27)
Replacement street bins – funded from contingency	0.09
Christmas trees – funded from contingency	0.03
CCTV – funded from contingency	0.09
Darlaston Pool energy – funded from contingency	0.03
Use of contingency	(0.24)
Externally Funded	
A41 Moxley Transforming Cities Fund – new grant	0.23
Renovation Park tennis courts – new grant	0.33
One Palfrey Big Local – new grant	0.16
Larksmill Pelsall Wood flood alleviation – new grant	0.04
Additional Highways Maintenance pothole funding	0.54
Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership reinvestment digital fund realignment	2.23
Social Housing Decarbonisation Scheme reduction	(0.61)
Towns Deal realignment	0.82
Devolved Formula Capital – reduced grant allocation	(0.12)
Revised capital programme 2023/24	138.38

*As Highway Authority, the Council has a statutory duty to maintain its highway network in a safe condition for road users. At a meeting of the council's Strategic Investment Board on 14th June 2023, a decision was taken, subject to approval from Cabinet, to increase capital investment for the maintenance of Walsall's highway network by £700,000. For 2023/2024 Walsall Council has allocated £2.8m of capital funding to maintain its highway network of 525 miles. The £2.8m annual budget has remained unchanged since 2017, whereas in contrast, the construction indices for inflation over this period have increased by 21.5%. This correlates closely with the published Bank of England inflation figure of 22.5% for the same period. On that basis the council would need to increase spend on highway maintenance by £700k to £3.5m during 2023/24 to resurface the same amount of its highway network that it was treating in 2017.

- 4.16 Table 4 summarises the 2023/24 capital programme and forecast outturn after the forecast re-phasing of £23.82m into 2024/25, with the forecast summary of the net £710k underspend shown at Table 5.

Table 4: Forecast capital analysis 2023/24					
Directorate	Budget £m	Predicted year end forecast £m	Variance before Carry forward £m	Carry Forward £m	Variance Over / (Under) £m
Council funded	57.94	41.31	(16.63)	15.92	(0.71)
Externally funded	80.44	72.54	(7.90)	7.90	0.00
Total	138.38	113.85	(24.53)	23.82	(0.71)

Table 5: Summary of Forecast Underspend 2023/24	
Project	£m
Workshop breakdown vehicle – project completed	(0.01)
Walsall Town Centre Public Realm Improvements – allocation not required	(0.36)
Social Housing Decarbonisation – allocation not required	(0.28)
Nottingham Drive Car Park – project completed	(0.06)
Total	(0.71)

- 4.17 The capital programme currently shows predicted re-phasing of £23.82m from 2023/24 to 2024/25 as shown in Appendix 6. Re-phasing occurs for a number of reasons such as late confirmation of grant approvals, timing of projects that may fall over more than one financial year, contract delays out of our control due to waiting for funding confirmation or Government approval.

Development Investment

- 4.18 A sum of £40m was approved by full Council in February 2021, with a further £30m in February 2022, and £29m in February 2023; a total of £99m set aside over the 6-year period 2021/22 to 2026/27 for council development investment opportunities, including emerging regeneration schemes, where funding or match funding is required, and major capital projects. The current proposed use (and as yet unallocated amount) is set out in Appendix 7.

Enabling Technology Programme

- 4.19 The Enabling Technology (ET) programme provides the underlying core technology platform (CTP) which delivers re-usable components and standard patterns upon which solutions to meet business requirements can be built and subsequently integrated into back-office systems providing our customers with easy to use self-service digital processes which in turn help us to create capacity for our officers through automation. ET originally included 6 investment areas: Service Channel management, Customer Relationship Management, Business Insights, Integration, Supporting solutions and Internal Capacity/Resources. Further work streams have since been introduced into the ET programme - Visualisation & Reporting, Automation and Microsoft Centre of Excellence which will govern Citizen Development.
- 4.20 The original allocation for this project of £10.6m was approved in 2020/21, with the carry forward of £4.7m (into year 2023/24) forecast to be fully utilised to continue work on the Core Technology Platform and the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. An additional £2.891m is required to support the three additional work streams and to bring more services on-line in the CRM System including integration into back-office line of business systems such as Payments, Alloy (Highways and Clean &

Green), Mosaic (Childrens and Adults), APAS (Planning) and M3 (Regulatory Services) - this will provide fully digital and automated end to end processes.

- 4.21 Any new contracts entered into utilising this funding will be in compliance with the Council's Financial Rules; support from Procurement and Legal Services will be requested as and when appropriate.
- 4.22 The original blueprint (from PWC work proposal) suggested a range of £12.3m to £15.2m, which the adjusted total allocation is within. This additional funding was endorsed by the council's Strategic Investment Board on 12 April 2023. There is also potential for a further release of £1.45m in 2024/25 and £1.45m in 2025/26 pending further review. Cabinet are asked to approve the release of £2.891m from the development pool for the continuation of the Enabling Technology Programme.
- 4.23 The implications of not approving are (a) Customer Access Management (CAM) and other work streams will not be able to transform and subsequently deliver efficiencies already accounted for and (b) we will be left with 2 platforms - one which is not built to Walsall standards and the other which will be built to Walsall standards but not accommodating any digital processes.

Enterprise Zones – Phoenix 10

- 4.24 At its meeting on 17 June 2020 Cabinet agreed to enter into the Sale and Purchase Agreement, Funding Agreement, Overage Agreement and Car Park Licence with Henry Boots Developments Ltd, committing the council to delivery of the Phoenix 10 project on the basis that the funding package of the scheme was secured. The funding package was a blend of external Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (BCLEP) and Homes England Funding. Part of the BCLEP funding included £6.5m to be funded from the Enterprise Zone mechanism, which requires the council to borrow against future business rates generated from the site.
- 4.25 At its meeting on 24 June 2020 the Black Country Joint Committee approved that future business rates generated from Phoenix 10 can be utilised by the council to recover borrowing costs. This sum is therefore included with the total funding for Enterprise Zones within the council's capital programme. Although there are always risks in relation to future business rate being realised, the current live Enterprise Zone financial model forecasts that there are sufficient business rates generated to recover the borrowing and includes prudent assumptions around bad debt and contingencies.
- 4.26 Cabinet is asked to agree to borrow up to £6.5m to fund part of the Phoenix 10 funding package on the basis this sum will be reimbursed via retained business rates as approved by the Black Country Joint Committee at its meeting on 24 June 2020.

Financial Health Indicators

- 4.27 Appendix 8 contains financial health indicator performance as at 31 August 2023 (30 September 2023 for revenue and capital forecast as referred to in this report). The primary purpose of these is to advise Cabinet of the current financial health of the authority in order to provide assurance to them in their role. The indicators cover a number of areas as follows:

Treasury Management

- 4.28 The indicators show the actual borrowing and investment rates for 2022/23 and the forecast for 2023/24 against set targets. Proactive and robust management of the council's debt and investment portfolios is forecast to result in positive variances against most of the financial health indicator targets for 2023/24.

Balance Sheet

- 4.29 These detail ratios for the last 4 financial years 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22 and pre-audit figures for 2022/23 which show the liquidity of the authority.

Revenue performance

- 4.30 This section shows collection rates for council tax and business rates, the average number of days to collect sundry debt and the number of days to process creditor payments for 2023/24 and the performance against profile for 2023/24. Sundry debt collection is above target by 1 day with performance in relation to the processing of creditor payments better by 3 days. Council tax is marginally below target with NNDR collection rates higher than target.

Management of Resources

- 4.31 This section details the outturn position for 2022/23 (pre audit) and 2023/24 year-end forecast for revenue and capital, which is based on the financial position as at 30 September after use of and transfer to reserves and mitigating actions of £14.61m.
- 4.32 The capital forecast as at the end of September is a forecast underspend of £710k after the rephasing of £23.82m carry forward into 2024/25. Capital receipts are currently forecast to be on budget pending a review of available asset disposals which is fully dependent on timing and market conditions.

Prudential Indicators

- 4.33 Appendix 9 contains the prudential indicators as at 31 August 2023. The primary purpose of these is to provide assurance to Cabinet that the authority is borrowing and investing in a sound and prudent manner. Indicators are approved by Council on an annual basis.

National Indicators

- 4.34 These indicators are nationally set and provide an indication of the council's exposure to interest rate risks, the proportion of the council's budget used to finance capital expenditure and the borrowing limits for the current year.

All of these indicators were met in 2022/23 and are forecast to be met in 2023/24.

The targets that these prudential indicators are monitored against have been taken from the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2023/24 onwards.

Local Indicators

4.35 These indicators have been set in consultation with the Treasury Management Panel, which is chaired by the S151 Officer, to provide further assurances to the authority that borrowing and investment is being undertaken in a sound and prudent manner.

- L2 - Average length of debt – The target acceptable limit is within 15-25 years. The authority's current position is 18.95 years, which is within the target range.
- L3a - Net borrowing costs as % of net council tax requirement. The target figure of 20.00% represents an upper limit of affordable net borrowing costs as a percentage of the net council tax requirement for the authority. The actual level of net borrowing costs is currently less than the upper limit, showing as 3.96%, which in the main is linked to the work undertaken by the service to seek secure favourable rates on investments and reduced costs on borrowing, thus reducing the overall net borrowing costs.
- L3b - Net borrowing costs as % of Tax Revenue. The target figure of 12.50% represents an upper limit of affordable net borrowing costs as a percentage of tax revenues for the authority. The actual level of net borrowing costs is currently less than the upper limit, showing as 2.65%, which in the main is linked to the work undertaken by the service to seek to secure favourable rates on investments and reduced costs on borrowing, thus reducing the overall net borrowing costs.
- L9a-9d – Bank of England have continually increased the base rate over the 23/24 period, currently showing a base rate of 5.25%. This has had a corresponding affect in relation to investment yields. At-call, short term and long term investments are outperforming their individually set 2023/24 target rates.

All the above indicators were met in 2022/23 and are forecast to be met in 2023/24 except the following:

- L8. Our investment rates for short term interest and at-call rates are very similar this year as we are placing Short Term investments on average for around a month at a time, so there is therefore little difference between these two types of returns for the council. The budget was based on an at call rate of 2.50% and short term rate of 3.75%, but with continual rate rises now in this financial year the at-call rate is responding very quickly and becoming more in line with our Short Term investments which may have been placed a month or two earlier.
- L11b. Average rate on all investments (inc property fund) is currently 4.35% which is lower than budget set at 4.54%. As short term rates catch up with bank rate rises and new investments are placed it is expected that this indicator will be met by financial year end.

Council Plan Priorities

4.36 The council's financial strategy and annual budget process is designed to ensure that resources follow council priorities and deliver outcomes as set out in the Council Plan 2022-25.

Risk Management

4.37 The 2023/24 budget and level of operating reserves were set following a robust financial risk assessment. The level of reserves can only be set based on a set of realistically foreseeable or predicted parameters. Due regard is made to the strategic and operational risks facing the council. Some of these relate to the current economic

condition, others to potential regulatory or national issues, which may have a local impact. Best professional judgement and estimates were applied in terms of the ongoing impact of the global pandemic and rising cost of living pressures.

- 4.38 Managers are required to deliver service and improvement targets on time, to standard and within budget. The resource allocation process is governed by the overarching Medium Term Financial Framework (MTFF). Risk management is an integral part of this activity and is embedded in budget preparation, monitoring and forecasting to enable potential variances and risks to be identified early and addressed.
- 4.39 There are also a number of increased risks in 2023/24 as set out within this report. Financial forecasts have been included where known or are estimated. Actions have been taken to address these risks and reduce the forecasted overspend caused by these pressures. Mitigating actions are set out within this report.
- 4.40 As well as financial risk, the council maintains a register that highlights key themes of organisational risk which is reported to Audit Committee as part of their annual work programme. The Strategic Risk Register (SRR) is regularly reviewed and amended where appropriate. The SRR is reported to Corporate Management Team and oversight in relation to this rests with Audit Committee, which will receive a number of reports during 2023/24.

Financial Implications

- 4.41 The financial implications are as set out in the main body of this report. The council has a statutory responsibility to set a balanced budget and to ensure it has an adequate level of reserves. The council takes a medium-term policy led approach to all decisions on resource allocation. The potential forecast revenue variance, prior to mitigating actions being implemented, is significant and requires strong and robust management to ensure the council outturns within budget by year end. Actions are being taken to address this and progress will continue to be reported throughout 2023/24 to Cabinet. A S151 panel is being established, comprising of senior finance and other officers, to review additional options to mitigate the position.
- 4.42 Opening unallocated general reserves for 2023/24 were £18.70m. The medium-term financial framework (MTFF) requires that a prudent level of reserves is maintained. This was set at no less than £16.12m for 2023/24. The potential overspend of £3.72m within this report would reduce available reserves to below this and action is being taken to address this to ensure we outturn with an appropriate level of reserves.

Legal implications

- 4.43 The council is required to set and operate within a balanced budget. Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires the chief finance officer (CFO / S151 Officer), in consultation with the council's monitoring officer, to make a report under this section if it appears to him or her that the expenditure of the authority incurred (including expenditure it proposes to incur) in a financial year is likely to exceed the resources (including sums borrowed) available to it to meet that expenditure. In practice, this is most likely to be required in a situation in which reserves have become depleted and it is forecast that the council will not have the resources to meet its expenditure in a particular financial year. This mechanism, however, is impractical and should be avoided, as issuing a S114 notice requires all non-statutory spend to cease immediately, a situation which would just exacerbate the current situation.

- 4.44 CIPFA's guidance to CFO's has been modified to allow councils under budgetary pressure due to Covid-19 the time and space to explore alternatives to freezing spending via a S114 notice. The two specific modifications are:
- At the earliest possible stage, a CFO should make informal confidential contact with DLUHC to advise of financial concerns and a possible forthcoming S114 requirement.
 - The CFO should communicate the potential unbalanced budget position due to Covid-19 to DLUHC at the same time as providing a potential S114 scenario report to the council executive (cabinet) and the external auditor.
- 4.45 The council will continue to have due regard to its statutory responsibilities in proposing any changes to service provision and its statutory responsibilities in relation to setting a balanced budget.

Procurement Implications / Social Value

- 4.46 All procurement activity is being reviewed, with a focus on identifying opportunities that will enable us to financially support our current and future services, especially those developed by Walsall Proud. It will do this by reviewing and reducing third party spend and improving the 'Procure to Pay' process and systems. The Third Party Spend Board supports and challenge services through the gateways of the commissioning and procurement process, with the aim of achieving best value for money.

Property Implications

- 4.47 Cabinet on 20 April 2022 approved the council's Strategic Asset Plan 2022-27: the key document which sets out the council's vision and approach for the management of its property portfolio under the Corporate Landlord model.

The Corporate Landlord model approach takes a more strategic approach to property and asset management across the council, bringing together property, facilities management and commissioning responsibilities into a key enabling service under the council's new functional model. This will ultimately enable the development and implementation of an estate that supports Proud and the wider corporate objectives of the council.

Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 4.48 This report is prepared with consideration of any impacts that any decisions would have on health and wellbeing. Any implications arising from the budget and reporting of performance against the budget will be reported to members along with any actions which are required to be addressed prior to implementation of proposals.

Staffing Implications

- 4.49 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.50 The 2010 Equality Act lays a requirement to have due regard to the equality impact when exercising its function. As a public body, the council is required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), as set out in the Equality Act, 2010. The PSED

requires the council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. Failure to meet these requirements may result in the council being exposed to costly, time-consuming, and reputation-damaging legal challenges. The budget is equality impact assessed and consulted on as appropriate, with feedback and actions arising from these reported to Members during budget setting.

Climate Change

- 4.51 This report is prepared with consideration of the council's Climate Change Action Plan, and the budget will need to consider the six key areas of the Plan: strategy, energy, waste, transport, nature, resilience and adaptation (as appropriate).

Consultation

- 4.52 The report is prepared in consultation with the S151 Officer, Corporate Management Team, relevant managers and directors.

5. Decide

- 5.1 Cabinet may wish to consider additional actions to address the matters set out in this report.

6. Respond

- 6.1 Following Cabinet's consideration and approval, the S151 Officer will ensure implementation of the recommendations.

7. Review

- 7.1 Regular monitoring reports will continue to be presented to Cabinet on the forecast for 2023/24, including an update on risks and impact on the budget for 2024/25 and beyond.

Background papers: Various financial working papers.

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**Shaun Darcy - S151 Officer,
and Director of Finance,
Corporate Landlord and Assurance
18 October 2023**



Judith Greenhalgh
Interim Executive Director – Resources
18 October 2023



Councillor M Bird
Leader of the Council
18 October 2023

Appendix 1 - Directorate Forecast Positions 2023/24 prior to mitigating actions

The following sections provide more detail on directorate pressures and actions being taken to address these.

Adults Social Care (£14.17m prior to mitigating actions, after use of and transfers to reserves)

The potential forecast position after planned net use of reserves is £14.17m above budget prior to any mitigating actions. Mitigating actions of £1.76m have been identified reducing the overspend to £12.41m as detailed in Appendix 4.

The main reasons for this £14.17m can be split into 'Business as usual' (BAU) of £10.90m and 'Impact of Service Transformation Plan' (STP) of £3.27m.

The reasons for the STP position of £3.27m are as follows:

- £2.21m - £1.76m carried forward from 2022/23 for cohorts 1 to 3 above the S75 amount, and £460k shortfall in new 2023/24 saving for cohort 4 under the Learning Disability Joint Funding arrangements. On-going discussions with the Integrated Care Board regarding the joint funding arrangement from 2020/21 remain in progress;
- £820k – delay in the 2022/23 saving relating to Better Care Finance due to futureproofing and integration with other systems;
- £240k - due to the STP relating to developing and delivering additional support to carers to be aligned to locality reviews.

The reasons for the BAU position of £10.90m are as follows:

- £3.55m – Reviews - net increase due to the impact of 'business as usual' reviews of client packages undertaken during the period of February to August 2023. Compared to last year, there has been a significant increase in the number of reviews carried out, with more of these reviews resulting in an increase in package costs;
- £3.77m – Inflow / Attrition / Backdating- increase due to net inflow of new, deceased and ended clients within the first five months of this financial year. This increase is a combined impact of new clients being placed at a higher average cost than originally budgeted and the number of expected deaths and ended placements being significantly lower than the budgeted trends. It should be noted the full year impact of any changes to client numbers and associated costs at the beginning of the financial year have a greater impact on the position;
- £3.97m – continuation of trends - based on 5 months of data and more informed intelligence, future projections now reflect current trends relating to 'business as usual' reviews and net inflow and outflow of service users continuing for the remainder of the financial year;
- (£2.18m) – Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF) funding - Government have recently announced a further £570m of MSIF across financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25. This is to address issues such as discharge delays, social care waiting times, low fee rates, and workforce pressures. This is in addition to the £400m included in the February 2022 Cabinet report and equates to an additional £2.18m for Walsall in 2023/24 which will be used to support demand led services across Adult Social care in line with grant conditions;
- £1.84m – Overspend on intermediate care services. This is based on current demand and future projections. This position takes into account the use of Hospital Discharge Grant funding as announced by government and the use of

uncommitted Better Care Fund inflation for 2023/24. Further detailed work is currently taking place on the cost modelling and discussions with health partners on funding allocations, alongside work to identify options to mitigate any remaining pressure. This also includes the impact of a recent £400k reduction in the ICB's Better Care fund inflation contribution to the position.

- £230k - increase in the general bad debt provision to reflect a 50% provision for current outstanding client debt of £8.45m as at the end of August 2023. Improvements in the financial assessment data capture processes and procedures should see a reduced number of credits/write offs.
- £580k - Contractual inflation on the Housing 21 unitary charge is higher than originally included in the budget for 2023/24 as based on February RPIx prior to the charge year. This is partially offset by use of the remaining Housing 21 reserve and additional client contribution income;
- (£560k) – additional client contribution and health income relating to care packages partly offset by a shortfall in the income budget associated with the Learning Disabilities joint funding arrangements when compared to the Section 75 agreement with Walsall ICB;
- (£310k) – due to a delay in recruiting to vacant posts across the directorate.

Mitigating actions of £1.76m have been identified to reduce the overall forecast which are detailed at Appendix 4

Risks - there are also high risks of £7.80m which could impact the forecast position should they materialise, and these are detailed in Appendix 2.

Performance data relating to Adult Social Care demand is attached at Appendix 10.

Public Health on budget after planned use of and transfer to reserves

The current net forecast position prior to the net use of/transfer to reserves is an overspend of £2.13m. After net use of reserves the service is forecast to be on budget. The £1.87m overspend covered by reserves relates to the following:

- (£120k) – underspend on staffing due to vacancies;
- £1.99m - projects planned to be funded from reserves including investment into mental health and young adults wellbeing service and sexual health;
- £0.26m - Partial delay in achieving the STP proposal relating to the 'review of existing transformation fund' (total saving £0.30m of which £0.04m has been delivered). This is mitigated on a one-off basis for 2023/24, plans to be identified for 2024/25 onwards.

Communications, Branding & Marketing (on budget after planned use of and transfer to reserves)

The current net forecast position after the net use of reserves is on budget. This includes one-off mitigation from underspends within the service to cover the delay in a £30k saving relating to the generation of additional income. A plan is being identified to achieve this in full for 2024/25 onwards.

Children's (£3.65m prior to mitigating actions, after planned use of and transfers to reserves)

The potential forecast position after planned net use of reserves is £3.65m above budget prior to any mitigating actions, however mitigating actions of £370k have been identified reducing the overspend to £3.28m.

The main reasons for the currently reported position are:

- £2.08m due to increased demand and costs for children in care relating broken down as follows:
 - £311k full year impact for the increased demand over and above budget for the multiple sibling groups who entered care during January/February;
 - £680k increased demand for remand placements following an extraordinary intake in January / February 2023;
 - £890k pressure relating to placement moves expected during 2023/24. This is fully offset by reserves;
 - £1.10m pressure if net inflow / outflow trends to date continue for the remainder of the financial year. This is fully offset by reserves;
 - £1.70m increased reliance on Independent Fostering Agency, external residential and mother and baby placements for those children and young people entering care this financial year, in comparison to budget and to the prior three year trend;
 - (£310k) additional government income to support the costs of unaccompanied asylum seeking children through the increased number of hotel transfer and national transfer scheme claims and the use of lower cost placements such as supported accommodation;
 - (£320k) underspend within internal residential services, primarily due to vacancies, as the two new homes are set to open part way through the financial year;

Performance data on children in care is attached at Appendix 11.

- £690k use of agency within the Educational Psychologists team. This team currently has a large number of vacant posts therefore agency workers will be used in order to meet the authority's statutory requirement. Estimated agency costs forecast for the year are £1.19m offset by an underspend on vacant posts of (£0.50m). A business case has been completed to request investment into the service from 2024/25 to fund the costs associated with increasing the resources available within the team on an ongoing basis;
- £100k legal fees due to ongoing pressures linked to increases in demand on legal services and complexity of the cases involved. This is mitigated by reserves;
- £118k recruitment and retention unachieved benefit. A £634k saving for recruitment & retention of social workers was unachieved in 2022/23 and was carried forward to 2023/24. Based on current agency and staffing information, £118k of this is not expected to be achieved in this financial year. The service continue to work to embed plans to ensure this can be fully achieved in 2024/25.
- £130k additional costs linked to the introduction of Senior Social Worker posts. Investment was approved in 2022/23 to support the cost of changing a number of current Social Worker posts to Senior Social Worker posts in order to support the Recruitment and Retention (R&R) strategy. The cost impact of this to date

has exceeded the approved investment following the conversion of a number of agency staff to permanent Senior Social Worker posts in the last 3 months of 2022/23 and in May 2023;

- £330k Home to School Transport overspend relating to the following:
 - Special Educational Needs home to school transport - demand growth for 2023/24 was previously expected to reduce to 10%. However, based on national statistics and actual growth seen to date, growth is now expected to be 14%. Costs are also based on current average costs including expected inflationary increases on routes due to be retendered in September 2023. These costs and growth increases have resulted in a shortfall in achievable savings of £130k;
 - Children in care transport £200k - although the number of pupils transported in 2023/24 has remained similar to that seen in 2021/22 and 2022/23, the average cost per child has increased due to more out of borough placements being made linked to the ongoing placement sufficiency issues.

There are also a number of small overspends across the directorate of c£200k relating to shortfalls in traded income within performance and information services £40k, agency costs within Therapeutic Family Time £90k and other minor movements within the directorate of £70k.

Mitigating actions of £370k have been identified to cover the pressures relating to placement moves as detailed at Appendix 4.

Risks - there are also high risks of £2.35m which could impact the forecast position should they materialise, and these are detailed in Appendix 2.

Customer Engagement (overspend of £1.19m after use of and transfers to reserves)

The forecast position is a £1.19m overspend after the net transfer of planned transfers of £1.16m (as set out in Appendix 3). Work is on-going to identify mitigating actions to reduce the overspend. The main reasons for the variance are:

- £1.29m due to delayed delivery of saving of council wide efficiencies relating to Customer Access Management. The total saving is £4.47m of which £1.54m relates to CXC within Customer Engagement. The remainder of the saving is currently held centrally and included elsewhere within the report. Of the £1.54m relating to CXC £250k is expected to be achieved in 2023/24 with the remainder to be achieved in 2024/25 due to delays in moving posts to CXC and implementation of new technology;
- £110k due to reduction in housing benefit related central government grants;
- £110k due to increased volume of bank charges for online payments;
- £580k relating to increased demand for bed and breakfast services;
- (£230k) receipt of homelessness top up government grant;
- (£670k) underspend on salaries due to vacancies and maximising grant funding against existing spend.

Risks - there are risks of £2.53m which could impact the forecast position should they materialise, and these are detailed in Appendix 2.

Economy, Environment and Communities (£1.88m prior to mitigating actions, after use of and transfers to reserves)

The forecast position is a potential overspend of £1.88m after planned transfers to and from reserves (as detailed in Appendix 3). Mitigating actions have been identified of £1.68m reducing the overspend to £200k.

The main variances are:

- Environment, Leisure and Commercial (£74k) – Over recovery of income from Active Living Centres (£275k) and registrars (£72k) due to increased demand, additional HAF income (£200k) and (£76k) due to vacant posts, offset by under recovery of markets income arising from reduced number of operating days and market stall erection contract increases £204k, under recovery of cremation and burial income due to increased competition and a fall in demand resulting in £177k not achieved, increased contract costs due to increased demand on the service £94k, consultancy costs for the Parks Strategy £20k and £67k of unachieved savings due to delayed delivery;
- Highways Transport & Operations £1.31m – Unachieved savings of £953k due to delayed delivery, HWRC contract pressure due to increased CPI inflation rates £244k, W2R contract pressure due to inflation increases £519k, additional costs of clothing, materials, vehicle hire and maintenance £121k, increased electricity costs of unmetered traffic signals £62k, increase in staffing costs £744k, part offset by a reduction in waste disposal costs (£767k), over recovery of trade income (£200k), Tarmac/Fleet income (£107k), additional Section 38 Income (£87k) and a reduction in fuel costs (£201k);
- Planning Services & Building Control - £607k pressure arising from additional staff and agency costs to support back log of cases and income reduction fully mitigated via an action plan;
- Regeneration & Development £260k – due to a delay in implementation of the restructure partly mitigated via use of EGP reserve as part of the action plan;
- Cultural Services (£161k) - Staffing underspends due to vacant posts and additional income from the Arena;
- Regulatory Services £72k – an overspend on legal fees for unauthorised encampments, under recovery of enforcement income part offset by staffing underspend due to delay in restructure;
- Library Services (£156k) – unachieved savings with no delivery plan £61k offset by underspend on staffing costs due to vacant posts;
- Communities and Partnerships (£48k) – arising from delay in project now to commence September 2023;
- Economy & Environment Management £111k - staffing pressure due to the cost of an interim Director post filled externally via agency partly offset by internal savings due to appointing to the Interim Executive Director and Director of Place posts internally.

Mitigating actions of £1.68m have been identified to reduce the overall forecast which are detailed at Appendix 4.

Risks - there are also risks of £650k which could impact the forecast position should they materialise and these are detailed in Appendix 2.

Resources and Transformation (£470k underspend after use of and transfers to reserves)

The forecast position after the net use of reserves of £3.61m is an underspend of £470k. The main areas of variance to budget are:

- Payroll (£43k) - (£85k) underspend on salaries and agency (£84k) partly offset by under recovery of traded income 48k;
- Finance (£222k) - due to vacant posts partly offset by agency and training costs;
- Democratic services £52k - overspend mainly due to under recovery of traded income £41k;
- Corporate assurance (£59k) - due to vacant posts (£76k) partly offset by increased contract costs;
- Human Resources (£106k) - underspend on salaries due to vacant posts (£308k) partly offset by agency costs £129k, a settlement payment £30k and £43k savings not achieved;
- Corporate Management Team (£80k) – increased staff costs / agency including recruitment costs offset by additional income;
- Information Governance £60k - £210k overspend due to under recovery of traded income partly offset by underspend on salaries (£72k) and computer equipment and licence fees of (£77k);
- DaTS (£271k) – (£378k) due to vacant posts, (£100k) additional grant income partly offset by agency costs of £214k;
- Corporate Procurement £191k - due to additional interim management and agency costs.

There are also high risks of £2.31m which could impact the forecast position should they materialise and these are detailed in Appendix 2.

Capital Financing on budget after use of and transfer to reserves)

Prior to any transfer to reserves the position is an underspend of £7.80m. £5.70m of the underspend is in line with expectations when the budget was set due to a reduction in borrowing costs and an additional saving on new borrowing of £1.42m is forecast in year. An additional underspend of £680k is also forecasted due to higher investment returns than expected. From these savings £5.72m will be transferred to reserves to be used to smooth known increases in borrowing costs from 2025/26 onwards and to the CCLA property fund valuation reserve which has been set up to mitigate risk arising from the removal of the statutory override in relation to property fund valuations. The reserve was set up to smooth the impact of valuation changes on revenue. £2.08m is therefore shown as an underspend within this report.

Central (£0.01m overspend after use of and transfer to reserves)

There is currently a £2.93m overspend relating to a saving that is currently not expected to be achieved in year in relation to the CAM workstream due to delays in implementation of the enabling technology. This is being held centrally and will be allocated to services when actions have been identified as to how this will be achieved. This has been offset by a one-off windfall income from business rates following the Valuation Office amendment to the rateable value of the art gallery and a further £250k underspend against the in-year budget as this is no longer required.

Appendix 2: Summary of potential risk

POTENTIAL RISK – HIGH RISK ITEMS ONLY	POTENTIAL COST OF RISK £m
Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub	
Outstanding debt from Walsall ICB relating to S117 and CHC recharges over one year old. The directorate is working with the ICB to resolve any queries relating to this outstanding debt.	5.49
Saving proposals currently identified as 'not fully guaranteed' (Amber).	0.23
Reduced direct payment refunds based on current levels.	0.50
Residential and nursing uplift commitments in excess of original investment.	0.30
Impact of backdating information within Mosaic. Risk of active/placements with financial commitments not yet recorded on the database and therefore omitted from the current forecast position.	0.50
Additional risk arising from discharges out of the Intermediate Care Service and placements made at a significantly higher weekly cost than the average existing clients.	0.60
Impact of specific provider failure. A provider has potential financial stability issues, commissioning and operational teams are continuing to support this provider. The risk is that current clients would need to be transferred to another care home should this materialise.	0.18
Total Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub	7.80
Children's and Education	
Continued placement moves over and above the £2m investment.	1.11
Additional uplift requests from placement providers for 2023/24 – awaiting outcome from the regional commissioning IFA framework group regarding uplift requests of up to 7.5%	0.50
Average weekly costs of external placements continue to rise.	0.50
Delays in recruitment and reduction in capacity in the Educational Psychologist team leads to need for additional agency costs to complete statutory assessments.	0.14
Increased costs for more complex cases receiving support from short breaks services.	0.10
Customer Engagement	
Saving proposals relating to CXC currently identified as 'not fully guaranteed' (Amber)	0.25
Increased risk of additional demand for bed and breakfast services to national levels.	1.38
Increased costs above expected to bring the housing register in house.	0.90
Total Children's, Education and Customer Engagement	4.88
Economy, Environment and Communities	
Loss of income in bereavement services due to new competitor entering the market and reduction in burial demand.	0.32

POTENTIAL RISK – HIGH RISK ITEMS ONLY	POTENTIAL COST OF RISK £m
Regulatory services due to back log of inspections.	0.05
Increased costs from co-mingled Coventry MRF when opened in October 2023.	0.12
Increase tonnage for garden waste and disposal and increased landfill disposal and tax.	0.10
Bereavement Cemeteries and Crematorium VAT repayment.	0.06
Total Economy, Environment and Communities	0.65
Resources and Transformation	
Increase in locum costs due to difficulty recruiting to solicitor posts	0.46
Increased cost of energy	1.85
Total Resources and Transformation	2.31
TOTAL HIGH RISKS	15.64

Appendix 3 – Details of (use of) / transfer to reserves

Reserve	Use of Reserve £	Transfer to Reserve £	Details of use of reserve
Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub			
Covid-19 – Omicron	(170,000)	0	Costs associated with the plan to strengthen the Carers Strategy across the borough following Covid-19.
Housing 21	(476,910)	0	Mitigating action to fund the increase in unitary charge above that included in the budget due to higher RPI being applied than expected.
National Development Team for Inclusion Project	(258,814)		Use of grant funding carried forward from 2022/23.
Better Care Fund (BCF) / Improved Better Care Fund 2 (iBCF2)	(40,000)	0	Costs associated with social care activity/intermediate Care.
Public Health	(1,997,343)	120,364	Relates to grant funding for Public Health projects – Better Mental Health, Adult Weight Management and Universal Drug / Crime.
IFRS – accounting treatment	(300,651)	245,304	Related to grant funding for assessments, social worker capacity support, Oral Care & other small grants.
Social Care Grant – Doctor’s assessments	(39,006)	0	To support back log of Best Interest Assessors / Deprivation of Liberty safeguard assessments.
Social Care demand / contingency	(558,000)	2,371,967	To fund increase in demand / costs.
Proud - Adult Social Care	(2,986,801)	0	To fund investment and resources to deliver Proud workstream activity.
Total Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub	(6,827,525)	2,727,635	
Children’s Services			
IFRS – accounting treatment	(1,335,572)	78,020	Relates to grant funding for School Improvements, Safeguarding Families, Protecting Children, Regional Recovery, FDAC, Personal Advisors, School Led Tutoring & Family Hubs.
Dedicated Schools Grant	(9,125)	0	To fund specific projects as agreed via schools forum.
Children in care complex cases	(255,986)	0	To fund pressures, including social workers and placement costs, of complex cases relating to young people in care.
Children’s external partner contributions	(257,814)	0	Use of Safeguarding Partnership and Regional Adoption Agency contributions.
Truancy fine income	(91,768)	164,752	Used to fund an attendance officer post.
Social care demand / contingency	(2,059,424)	0	To fund the additional costs of Childrens placement moves previously identified as risk which has now materialised.

Reserve	Use of Reserve £	Transfer to Reserve £	Details of use of reserve
Total Children's Services	(4,009,689)	242,752	
Children's - Customer Engagement			
Houses in multiple occupation (HMO) licences	(48,825)	0	To fund staff support costs relating to HMO licences.
IFRS – accounting treatment	(510,933)	0	Grant funding for Housing First scheme, homelessness, Rough Sleepers, refugee costs and other smaller projects.
Crisis support	(378,162)	0	To fund costs related to the Crisis Support Scheme.
Housing Domestic Retrofit Programme	(106,000)	0	
Housing IT System Implementation	(112,170)	0	To fund implementation costs.
Total Children's - Customer Engagement	(1,156,090)	0	
Economy, Environment & Communities			
Covid-19 – Community Champions	(148,377)	0	Costs of supporting residents who are most at risk of Covid-19.
Building control fees	(65,070)	0	Statutory account. Required to breakeven over a 3 year period which is reviewed annually.
Bus lane enforcement ring fenced income	(122,760)	111,404	Funding key projects in line with the legislation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - District signage - Rolling programme to refresh street name plates; - Road lines; - Introduction of Moving Traffic Enforcement legislation.
Street Lighting PFI	(3,029,669)	0	Grant funding to be utilised over the life of the project. This is being utilised to fund the increase in energy costs for 2023/24.
Shannon's Mill (commuted sum)	(3,000)	0	To cover the ongoing maintenance with a set proportion released each year.
King's Coronation	(20,000)	0	To fund community activities and involvement for Coronation celebrations across Walsall.
On Street Car Parking income (ringfenced)	(842,132)	0	To fund key projects in line with the legislation.
Economic growth programme (EGP)	(8,206)	312,344	To support costs within service to continue functions as per Cabinet report October 2020. Extended to 2023.
IFRS – accounting treatment	(1,089,590)	268,411	Primarily relates to grants / contributions carried forward for Domestic abuse, Bikeability, Section 106, Integration Area programme, Arts Council, England Cricket Board and other smaller projects.

Reserve	Use of Reserve £	Transfer to Reserve £	Details of use of reserve
Phoenix 10	(112,196)	0	To fund professional fees.
Willenhall Master Plan	(216,653)	0	Costs associated with the Willenhall Master Plan redevelopment.
Feasibility / Options appraisals	(173,904)	0	To cover costs which cannot be coded to capital and abortive costs of schemes.
Planning	(615,924)	0	To fund one off costs of agency to clear back log of applications.
Mediation reserve	(50,000)	0	To fund cost for unauthorised encampments activity.
Total Economy, Environment & Communities	(6,497,481)	692,159	
Resources & Transformation			
Audit and inspection	(90,372)	0	Cover additional internal audit contract costs in accordance with the contract.
Economic growth programme	(16,039)	102,655	To support costs within service to continue functions as per Cabinet report October 2020. Extended to 2023.
Enterprise Zones	(738,246)	1,694,610	Generated from surplus business rates from across the Black Country to fund the costs of future capital schemes.
Growing Places Fund	(121,394)	27,314	Funding received to support the Growing Places LEP programme management costs.
Growth Deal Programme	(19,516)	120,000	Funding received to support the Growing Places LEP programme management costs.
IFRS – accounting treatment	(20,118)	0	Primarily relates to grants / contributions carried forward where spend was delayed due to Covid-19 or spend spans more than 1 year.
Improvement projects	(930,832)	0	To fund costs associated with One Source and Cloud/Azure licencing costs.
Proud Resource Plan	(3,575,052)	0	To fund investment and resources to deliver Proud workstream activity.
Redundancy	(34,794)	0	To fund redundancy costs.
Total Resources and Transformation	(5,546,363)	1,944,579	

Reserve	Use of Reserve £	Transfer to Reserve £	Details of use of reserve
Capital Financing			
Borrowing re-scheduling / CCLA	0	5,720,000	To fund borrowing re-scheduling costs dependent on market conditions and to manage risk / pressures for changes in interest rates and on-going impact of airport dividend shortfalls due to impact of changes in the business plan. £30m investment - Statutory override till end March 2025 - once this runs out we will have to put any gains and losses on the investment in year into the accounts and this will smooth these changes.
Minimum revenue provision (MRP)	(577,000)	0	To smooth minimum MRP costs as per approved MRP policy.
Pensions – upfront payment borrowing costs	(9,205)	0	To fund borrowing costs of funding pension payments upfront for 3 years to release savings.
Total Capital Financing	(586,205)	5,720,000	
Centrally Held			
Proud	(564,000)	0	Funding of one-off investment in relation to Proud programme.
Borrowing rescheduling	(496,226)	0	Planned one off use of reserve to fund WMVC UKSPF Fee.
Enterprise Zones – part of section 31 grant	0	18,338	Transfer of business rates income relating to the Enterprise Zone.
Environmental Levy	(550,400)	0	Planned use of reserve no longer required to support one off expenditure included in the 2023/24 budget.
Business rates retention scheme	(17,812)	5,264,000	Planned transfer to fund volatility of business rates income due to the pandemic and any appeals and smooth future changes to the scheme.
Cost of Living	(190,000)	0	Mitigating action – Housing 21 inflation increases.
Risk	(6,820,000)	0	Mitigating action to cover Red savings forecast to be delayed and with no alternative actions.
Mediation	(100,000)	0	Mitigating action - to cover additional legal fees within Childrens Services.
Social Care Demand / Contingency	(3,710,000)	0	Mitigating action – to cover unforeseen increased costs within Adult Social Care and Childrens Services.
Total Centrally Held	(12,448,438)	5,282,338	
TOTAL RESERVES	(37,071,792)	16,619,483	

*There are a number of use of reserves which are in part being used as part of the mitigating actions as detailed in Appendix 3.

Appendix 4: Mitigation actions included within the report

Directorate	Detail of mitigating actions	£m
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hubs	Over achievement and full year impact of the 2022/23 savings predominantly relating to review of existing client placements.	1.14
	Release of one-off grant relating to the streamline of Adult Social Care assessments.	0.14
	Use of remaining Housing 21 reserve to partially mitigate the contractual inflation pressure.	0.48
Total Mitigation included for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hubs		1.76
Children's Services - Children's and Education	One off reallocation of funding and reserves to support Children's pressures.	0.37
Total Mitigation included for Children's Services and Education		0.37
Economy, Environment & Communities	Use of legacy section 106 income held in reserve.	0.36
	Holding of vacant head of service post.	0.07
	Economic Growth Programme funding held in reserves.	0.46
	Use of corporate reserve to support planning.	0.25
	Use of parking reserve.	0.03
	Use of legacy commuted sums.	0.03
	Capitalisation of Velocity Patcher.	0.20
	Capitalisation of book fund.	0.15
Reduction of non-essential operational costs within Highways & Transport.	0.13	
Total Mitigation included for Economy, Environment & Communities		1.68
Central	Use of Risk Reserve.	6.82
	Use of Cost of Living Reserve.	0.19
	Use of Mediation Reserve.	0.10
	Use of Social Care Demand / contingency reserve.	3.71
Total Mitigation included for Central		10.82
Total Mitigation included in forecast outturn		14.63

Appendix 5: Benefits 2023/24 currently identified as 'Red' due to risk of delayed delivery

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit £	Value of benefit identified as at high risk of non-delivery £	Value to be Mitigated In Year £	Reason	Mitigating Actions
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub	OP10 - Develop and deliver additional support to Carers	240,934	240,934	240,934	To be aligned to locality reviews.	Mitigated by full year effect of 2022/23 savings.
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub	OP13 - Learning disability joint funding tool – cohort 3	954,000	455,000	455,000	Awaiting detailed delivery plans - ICB discussions on JF tool.	Mitigated from Risk reserve for 2023/24 as detailed in Table 1 of the report.
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub	2022/23 - Efficiencies attributed to the implementation of Bettercare Finance System	770,905	720,905	720,905	Delay due to futureproofing and integration with other systems.	Mitigated from Risk reserve for 2023/24 as detailed in Table 1 of the report.
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub	2022/23 - Staffing impact following the implementation of Bettercare Finance System	94,079	94,079	94,079	Delay due to futureproofing and integration with other systems.	Mitigated from Risk reserve for 2023/24 as detailed in Table 1 of the report.
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub	2022/23 - Review for Learning Disabilities joint funding tool	1,757,270	1,757,270	1,757,270	Awaiting detailed delivery plans - ongoing ICB discussions on JF tool.	Part mitigated by 2022/23 full year effect overachievement £900k remainder mitigated from Risk reserve for 2023/24 as detailed in Table 1 of the report.
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub	2022/23 - Increased income from Print & Design service to external bodies	30,000	30,000	30,000	Awaiting detailed delivery plans.	Mitigated in 2023/24 through staffing vacancies and underspends in supplies and services.
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub	2022/23 - Review of the usage of the Public Health transformation fund	300,000	255,000	255,000	Review of current transformation funding in process of being finalised.	Corporately funded one-off for 2023/24.
Total Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub		4,147,188	3,553,188	3,553,188		

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit £	Value of benefit identified as at high risk of non-delivery £	Value to be Mitigated In Year £	Reason	Mitigating Actions
Children's Services	OP2 – Home to school transport review of contracts and route optimisation	300,000	131,958	131,958	Increase in expected demand for 2023/24.	Mitigated from Risk reserve for 2023/24 as detailed in Table 1 of the report.
Children's Services	OP6 - Review of current establishment and reduction in the use of agency staff, following recruitment of permanent staff	634,406	118,000	118,000	Recruitment and retention benefit will not be achievable based on current forecast.	Mitigated from Risk reserve for 2023/24 as detailed in Table 1 of the report.
Total Children's Services		934,406	249,958	249,958		
Customer Engagement	Part OP26 - Council wide efficiencies relating to Customer Access Management	1,540,000	1,290,000	1,290,000	Delay in implementation of Customer Experience Centre changes.	Mitigated from Risk reserve for 2023/24 as detailed in Table 1 of the report.
Total Customer Engagement		1,540,000	1,290,000	1,290,000		
Economy, Environment & Communities	P3a – Outsource outdoor pursuits service to a community group	12,878	12,878	12,878	Implementation delayed.	Currently mitigated by underspends in service.
Economy, Environment & Communities	P4 - Increase in bulky waste charges	136,000	105,000	105,000	Delay in new price on the web page due to Core Technology Platform work.	Currently being mitigated by general underspends within Clean and Green.
Economy, Environment & Communities	P6 - Rewilding of all urban grassed areas	352,348	352,348	352,348	Plans being reviewed and alternative saving proposals considered.	Currently being mitigated by general underspends within Clean and Green.
Economy, Environment & Communities	P12 - Parking dispensation charging of £15 per vehicle per day	19,500	14,625	14,625	Delay on technology to allow payments to be taken.	Mitigated by use of parking reserve.
Economy, Environment & Communities	P13 - Reintroduce staff parking charges	18,000	18,000	18,000	Delayed due to equality impact.	Currently mitigated by underspends in service.

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit £	Value of benefit identified as at high risk of non-delivery £	Value to be Mitigated In Year £	Reason	Mitigating Actions
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP1 - Review of fees and charges - increase planning development charges by 5%	1,385	1,385	1,385	Fee increase has resulted in under recovery.	Mitigated by use of reserve.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP4 - Regeneration & Economy team review	260,193	260,193	260,193	Restructure plans still not confirmed due to sickness absence.	Currently mitigated by underspends in service.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP16 - Enhancement of Darlaston Pool	15,000	11,250	11,250	Delay due to release of capital funds.	Currently mitigated by underspends in service.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP17 - Development of Oak Park office space	50,000	37,500	37,500	Delay due to release of capital funds.	Currently mitigated by underspends in service.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP18 - Improvement to direct debit collection process	10,000	5,000	5,000	Completion of project expected to be October 2023.	Currently mitigated by underspends in service.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP21 - Increase rental income from Park Lodges	5,000	4,034	4,034	Charges increase has not led to increased income as expected.	Mitigated by other venue hire income.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP23 - Review of fees and charges - increase bereavement charges by 5%, registrars and interment fees by 3%	187,292	177,292	177,292	Charges increased but saving not achieved due to reduced demand.	Mitigated by additional income in other areas of Environment, Leisure and Commercial.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP54 - Charge developers for travel plans	30,000	30,000	30,000	Recruitment - no suitably skilled staff available to implement.	Mitigated by commuted sums reserve.
Economy, Environment & Communities	2022/23 - Offer residential gardening service	30,000	30,000	30,000	Business case has highlighted this benefit cannot be achieved. No delivery plan in place.	Mitigation by general underspends within Clean and Green.

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit £	Value of benefit identified as at high risk of non-delivery £	Value to be Mitigated In Year £	Reason	Mitigating Actions
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP56 - Increase recycling rates and reduce contamination	382,523	382,523	382,523	Service currently has no plan on how to achieve this saving.	Currently being part mitigated by general underspends within Clean and Green £167k remainder mitigated from Risk reserve for 2023/24 as detailed in Table 1 of the report.
Economy, Environment & Communities	2022/23 - Review of Libraries Management	60,679	60,679	60,679	Head of Community Building role will move this forward when in post.	Underspends from salaries in service will be used to mitigate Red position.
Economy, Environment & Communities	2022/23 - Premium bulky waste collection service	15,000	15,000	15,000	Currently no demand for a premium service.	Currently being mitigated by general underspends within Clean and Green.
Total Economy, Environment & Communities		1,585,798	1,517,707	1,517,707		
Resources & Transformation	OP34 - Platinum Secure Storage	13,000	13,000	13,000	Contract currently under retendering.	Mitigated by overall Directorate underspend.
Resources & Transformation	OP36 - Promotion of One Source system to Schools for sickness absence data entry	30,000	30,000	30,000	Currently unable to roll out OneSource system to schools.	Mitigated by overall Directorate underspend.
Total Resources & Transformation		43,000	43,000	43,000		
Central	Part OP26 - Council wide efficiencies relating to Customer Access Management	2,930,000	2,930,000	2,930,000	Actions on how this will be achieved are still being finalised.	Mitigated from Risk reserve for 2023/24 as detailed in Table 1 of the report.
Total Central		2,930,000	2,930,000	2,930,000		
Total		11,180,392	9,583,853	9,583,853		

Appendix 6 - Re-phasing of capital funded schemes 2023/24 to 2024/25

Project	£m
Council Funded	
Capital Investment Earmarked Reserve	4.47
Capital Contingency	0.32
Looked After Children Out of Borough Placements	0.15
Council House Smoke & Heat Detection Fire Alarm	0.30
Operation Repair & Maintenance of Council Buildings	0.21
Walsall Council House-Modern Secure Reception	0.03
Council House Internal Decoration	0.03
Council House Plumbing	0.07
Council House Windows	0.99
Computer Aided Facilities Management System	0.05
New Homes Bonus	0.08
Regenerating Walsall	0.22
Enterprise Zones	0.67
Willenhall Masterplan	2.55
MyCMIS – asset management tracking system	0.01
ICT – Safe and Secure Environment	1.11
Enabling Technology	2.31
Maintaining a Safe and Secure Environment	0.28
Telephony Cloud Based System	0.46
Proud Card Payments Digital Website	0.83
Ways Of Working	0.25
Konica Multi-functional device re-tender	0.02
Archiving systems moving to customer access management retired	0.06
Changing Places toilets	0.12
Development Team capitalisation of posts	0.33
External Funded	
Bloxwich Town Deal	0.12
Walsall Town Deal	0.83
Land And Property Investment Fund	0.67
Growing Places Fund	0.66
Future High Street Fund	3.21
West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan (STP) 'Movement for Growth'	0.39
Limestone surveys	0.11
Family Hub Life Programme	0.01
Willenhall Masterplan	1.90
Total	23.82

Appendix 7 – Capital Pipeline Investment 2021/22 to 2026/27 – planned allocations

Scheme	Approval	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	Total £m
Budget - Original Allocation		28.00	0.00	22.00	10.00	10.00	0.00	70.00
Additional allocation		0.00	0.00	1.76	24.82	0.45	2.44	29.47
Budget per Council February 2023		28.00	0.00	23.76	34.82	10.45	2.44	99.47
Movement of Free School into Development Pool / other changes		0.00	0.00	1.31	-0.31	0.00	0.00	1.00
Rephasing as approved by Cabinet 19 July 2023		0.00	0.00	-22.02	1.08	16.09	4.85	0.00
Adjusted Budget		28.00	0.00	3.05	35.59	26.54	7.29	100.47
Balance c/f		0.00	26.05	15.01	1.73	26.40	48.16	
Regional Materials Recycling Facility	Cabinet 17 March 2021	0.00	(0.65)	(0.93)	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Future High Street Fund - match	Cabinet 21 April 2021	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	(4.04)	(1.07)	
Reedswood Land (risk)	Cabinet 16 June 2021	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Street Lighting	Cabinet 16 June 2021	(0.22)	(6.97)	(4.28)	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Children's Residential	Cabinet 16 June 2021	(0.97)	(0.10)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Transit site – part funding	Cabinet 20 October 2021	(0.33)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Streetly Cemetery improvements	Cabinet 15 December 2021	(0.43)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Willenhall Masterplan	Cabinet 9 February 2022	0.00	(2.68)	(2.10)	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Darlaston Boilers/baths	Cabinet 18 October 2022	0.00	(0.04)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Children in care / Foster Care refurbishment programme	Cabinet 9 February 2022	0.00	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)	0.00	0.00	
Fly Tipping project for CCTV	Cabinet 14 December 2022	0.00	(0.13)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Nottingham Car Park	Cabinet 21 June 2023	0.00	(0.24)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Cremator repair	Cabinet 21 June 2023	0.00	(0.05)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Mosaic system	Cabinet 21 June 2023	0.00	(0.03)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
HWRC station - Middlemore Lane	Cabinet 18 October 2022	0.00	0.00	(7.60)	(9.77)	0.00	0.00	
Active Public Spaces	Cabinet 18 October 2022	0.00	0.00	0.00	(1.00)	(0.74)	0.00	
Highways maintenance increased provision	SIB approved 14 June 2023 - see table 3 for movement	0.00	0.00	(0.70)	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Oak Park Active Living Centre conversion of small office space for commercial reasons	SIB approved 14 June 2023 - see table 3 for movement	0.00	0.00	(0.35)	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Old Square Public Realm	SIB approved 12 April 2023 - see table 3 for movement	0.00	0.00	(0.22)	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Total Allocated / Forecast to be allocated		(1.95)	(11.04)	(16.33)	(10.92)	(4.78)	(1.07)	
Unallocated Balance c/f		26.05	15.01	1.73	26.40	48.16	54.38	

**The budget report to Council in February 2023 also includes an allocation of £500k per annum to be set aside for minor capital works / capital contingency, subject to approval for its use on individual schemes.*

Appendix 8 Financial Health Indicators at August 2023

Treasury Management	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Target	2023/24 Actual
Average Interest Rate (Borrowing)			
- Excluding other local authorities	3.82%	4.21%	4.11%
- Including other local authorities	3.87%	4.33%	4.16%
Gearing Effect on Capital Financing Estimates	3.81%	5.00%	4.20%
Net Borrowing Costs / Council Tax Requirement and NNDR contribution	7.21%	12.50%	2.65%
Capital Financing Requirement (£m)	390.19	433.114	433.114
Authorised limit for external Debt (£m)	474.38	465.410	465.410
Investment Rate Average (excl Property fund)	1.81%	3.48%	4.44%

Balance Sheet Ratios	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23 (draft)
Current Assets: Current Liabilities	1.68	2.39	2.01	1.96	1.74
Useable Reserves: General Revenue Expenditure	0.72	0.73	1.02	1.07	0.77
Long Term Borrowing: Tax Revenue (Using both council tax and NNDR for tax revenue)	1.36	1.43	1.83	1.49	1.19
Long Term Assets: Long Term Borrowing	2.05	1.86	1.83	2.14	2.73
Total School Reserves: Dedicated School Grant	0.06	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.06

Revenues Performance % collected for financial year	2021/22 Actual Collected in total as at 31.08.23	2022/23 Actual Collected in total as at 31.08.23	2023/24	
			Profiled 2023/24	Actual 2023/24
Council tax %	95.5%	94.4%	42.0%	41.7%
Total Council Tax collected	£146,379,724	£150,143,547	£69,700,000	£69,320,586
National Non Domestic Rate (NNDR) %	97.9%	97.8%	41.8%	45.5%
Total NNDR collected	£60,140,034	£70,523,603	£29,600,000	£32,208,070

Debtors and Creditors Performance	2022/23 Actual	2023/24	
		Target	Actual
Sundry Debtors Collection – Average number of days to collect debt	25 days	24 days	25 days
Average number of days to process creditor payments*	6.5 days	8 days	5 days

Management of Resources	2023/24		
Service Analysis	Target	Actual	Variance
Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub	73,668,573	86,066,976	12,398,403
Children's Services			
- Children's and Education	75,457,973	78,735,185	3,277,212
- Customer Engagement	3,172,380	4,361,485	1,189,105
Economy and Environment	36,696,742	36,893,509	196,767
Resources and Transformation	36,488,332	36,026,720	(461,612)
Council Wide	36,224,595	25,420,383	(10,804,212)
NNDR/Top Up	(117,545,553)	(117,545,553)	0
Total Net Revenue Expenditure	144,163,042	149,958,704	5,795,662
General Reserves	Minimum £7.2m Maximum £18.0m	N/A	N/A
Council Funded Capital Expenditure	57,934,707	41,300,778	(16,633,929)
External Funded Capital Expenditure	80,440,796	72,538,017	(7,902,779)
Total Capital Expenditure	138,375,503	113,838,795	(24,536,708)
Capital Receipts	2,925,000	2,925,000	0

Management of Resources	2022/23		
Service Analysis	Target	Actual	Variance
Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub	68,746,416	73,746,671	5,000,255
Children's Services			
- Children's and Education	81,911,515	91,219,606	9,308,091
- Customer Engagement	18,295,852	17,176,773	(1,119,079)
Economy and Environment	59,961,295	56,599,832	(3,361,463)
Resources and Transformation	31,681,780	30,302,297	(1,379,483)
Capital Financing	(14,636,398)	(20,935,898)	(6,299,500)
Central budgets	(107,535,211)	(110,036,285)	(2,501,074)
Total Net Revenue Expenditure	138,425,249	138,072,997	(352,253)
General Reserves	N/A	18,702,473	N/A
Council Funded Capital Expenditure	95,655,174	33,746,210	(61,908,964)
External Funded Capital Expenditure	138,982,534	61,696,354	(77,286,180)
Total Capital Expenditure	234,637,708	95,442,564	(139,195,144)
Capital Receipts	2,500,000	2,174,164	(325,836)

What this tells us

Treasury Management	
Average Interest Rate (Borrowing)	The average interest rate we are paying on the money we have borrowed compared to our target.
Gearing Effect on Capital Financing Estimates	Shows how a 1% increase in interest rates would affect the total interest cost to the council.
Net Borrowing Costs / Tax Requirement	Borrowing not financed by a grant from government, as a proportion of our Net Revenue Expenditure
Capital Financing Requirement (£m)	How much money we currently borrow to finance our capital programme.
Authorised limit for external Debt (£m)	The maximum amount of debt we should have at any one time
Investment Rate Average	The average interest rate we are receiving on the money we have invested.

Balance Sheet Ratios	
Current Assets: Current Liabilities	Our ability to meet our liabilities
Useable Reserves: General Revenue Expenditure	If our reserves are adequate to meet potential future variations.
Long Term Borrowing: Tax Revenue Using only council tax for tax revenue Using both council tax and NNDR for tax revenue	The effect of long term borrowing on our budget.
Long Term Borrowing: Long Term Assets	This allows us to understand the relationship between the money we borrow and the assets we have as they both change over time.
Total School Reserves: Dedicated School Grant	If school's reserves are at an appropriate level.

Revenues Performance	
% Collected for Financial Year Council Tax (%)	As a percentage the amount of council tax we collected during the financial year that runs from 1 April – 31 March. We collect council tax after the year that its related to, but this won't be included in this figure
National Non Domestic Rate (%)	As a percentage the amount of Business rates we collected during the financial year that runs from 1 April – 31 March. We collect council tax after the year that it related to.
Total Council Tax Collected (£m)	This tells us the amount of council tax we collected during the financial year that runs from 1 April – 31 March. We collect council tax after the year that it relates to, but this won't be included in this figure.
Total NNDR Collected (£m)	This tells us the amount of Business Rates we collected during the financial year that runs from 1 April – 31 March. We collect council tax after the year that it relates to, but this won't be included in this figure.
Sundry Debtors Collection Average number of days to collect debt	How long on average it takes us to collect money owed to us.
Average number of days to process creditors payments	How long on average it takes to pay our bills.

Management of Resources	
Service Analysis	
Children's Services Economy and Environment Adult Social Care Resources and Transformation Council Wide	Shows our forecast for how much we will spend on these services compared to what we planned and compared to how much we spent in the previous year.
General Reserves	Our forecast year end position on reserves against our opening balance.
Contingency	How much we have set aside and for unplanned expenditure, and how much we have left to spend.
Capital Expenditure	Forecast of our spend on capital programmes against our target
Capital Receipts	Forecast of how much money we expect to receive from selling some of our assets, against our target.

Appendix 9 - Prudential Indicators as at 31st August 2023

Prudential Indicator		Actual 2022/23 £m	Target 2023/24 £m	Actual Position at 31- March-24 £m	Variance to target	
					Numerical Variance	% Variance
Prl 1	Capital Expenditure	96.314	124.980	124.250	-0.730	-1%
This indicator is required to inform the council of capital spending plans, it is the duty of a local authority to determine and keep under review the amount that it can afford to allocate to capital expenditure. Capital expenditure may be funded by grant, capital receipts and borrowing.						
Prl 2	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream	4.05%	8.86%	5.83 %	-2.01	-23%
Financing costs - Divided by (Interest charged on loans Less Interest earned on investments)		Budget requirement (Revenue Support Grant + NNDR +Council Tax)		The ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream (General Fund) as a %		
Prl 3	Estimates of the incremental impact of new capital investment decisions on Council Tax	£43.02	£89.66	£89.66	0.00	0%
This is a notional amount indicating the amount of council tax band D that is affected by the capital programme in the budget report compared to existing approved commitments and current plans.						
Prl 4	Capital Financing Requirement	390.185	433.114	433.114	0.00	0%
This represents the underlying level of borrowing needed to finance historic and future capital expenditure. It is updated at end of the financial year.						
Prl 5	Authorised Limit for external debt	474.380	465.410	465.410	0.00	0%
The council may not breach the limit it sets, so it is important to allow prudent room for uncertain cash flow movements and borrowing in advance of future need.						
Prl 6	Operational Limit for external debt	431.250	423.100	423.100	0.00	0%
This has been set at the level of the capital financing requirement less the CFR items relating PFI and finance leases.						
Prl 7	Gross Borrowing exceeds capital financing requirement	No	No	No		
The CFR represents the underlying level of borrowing needed to finance historic capital expenditure. Actual net borrowing should be lower than this because of strong positive cash flow and balances. It would be a cause for concern if net borrowing exceeded CFR.						
Prl 8	Authority has adopted CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management	Yes	Yes	Yes		
To ensure that treasury management activity is carried out within best professional practice.						
Prl 9	Total principle sums invested for longer than 364 days must not exceed	5.0	25.0	5.0		

The council is at risk when lending temporarily surplus cash. The risk is limited by investing surplus cash in specified investments and by applying lending limits and high credit worthiness. These are kept under constant review.

Prudential Indicator continued		Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Actual 2022/23	Actual Position at 31-March-2024
Prl 10	Fixed Interest Rate Exposure	95.00%	40.00%	98.14%	97.90%
Prl 11	Variable Interest Rate Exposure	45.00%	0.00%	1.86%	2.10%
Prl 12	<i>Maturity Structure of Borrowing</i>				
	Under 12 months	25.00%	0.00%	12.84%	1.86%
	12 months and within 24 months	25.00%	0.00%	12.24%	19.00%
	24 months and within 5 years	40.00%	0.00%	20.25%	17.58%
	5 years and within 10 years	50.00%	5.00%	0.00%	0.00%
	10 years and above	85.00%	30.00%	54.67%	61.55%

Local Indicators as at 31st August 2023

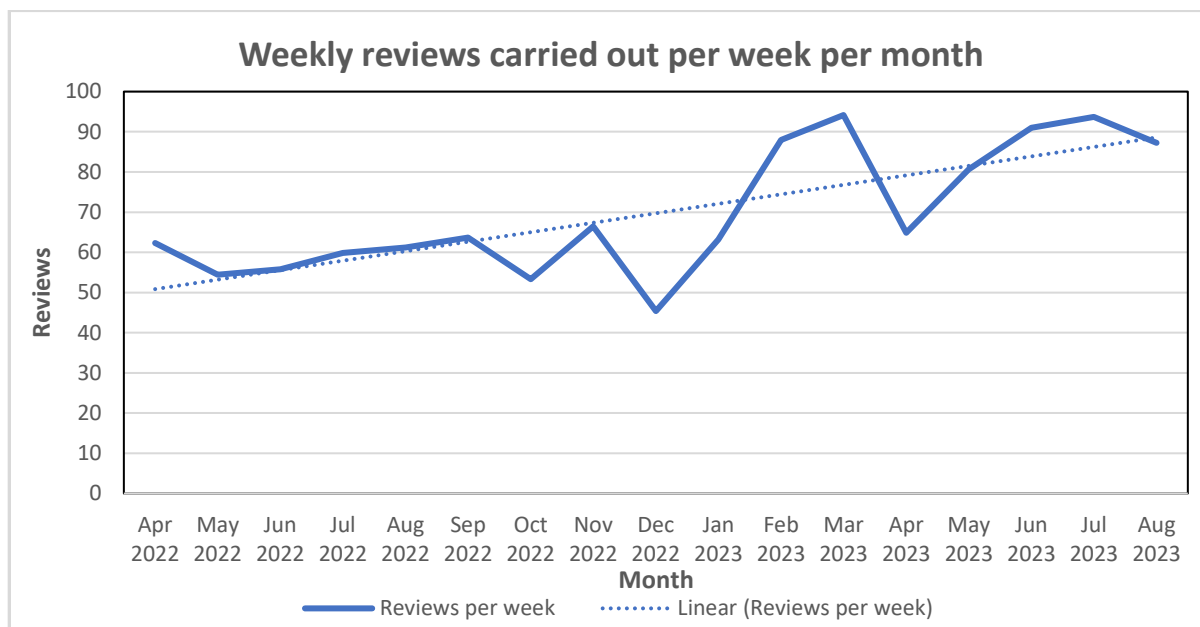
Local Indicators		Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Actual Position as at 31-March- 2024	Variance to target		Met
					Numerical Variance	% Variance	
L1	Full compliance with prudential code	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	Y
L2	Average length of debt	17.13	Lower Limit 15 years, Upper limit 25 years	18.95	-	-	Y
This is a maturity measure and ideally should relate to the average lifespan of assets.							
L3a	Financing costs as a % of council tax requirement	10.64%	20.00%	3.96%	-16.04	-80.19%	Y
L3b	Financing costs as a % of tax revenues	7.21%	12.50%	2.65%	-9.85	-78.82%	Y
These are a variation to Prl 3 excluding investment income and including MRP (amount set aside to repay debt costs). The target figure of 12.5% represents an upper limit of affordable net borrowing costs as a percentage of tax revenues for the authority. The actual level of net borrowing costs is currently less than the upper limit, which in the main is linked to the work undertaken by the service to seek to secure favorable rates on investments and reduced costs on borrowing, thus reducing the overall net borrowing costs.							
L4	Net actual debt vs. operational debt	61.42%	85.00%	55.51%	-29.49	-34.70%	Y
This assists the monitoring of the authority's debt position.							
L5	Average interest rate of external debt outstanding excluding OLA	3.82%	4.21%	4.11%	0.10	2.45%	Y
L6	Average interest rate of external debt outstanding including OLA	3.87%	4.33%	4.16%	0.17	3.82%	Y
The measure should be as low as possible. Other Local Authority debt (OLA) is managed on our behalf by Dudley council.							

L7	Gearing effect of 1% increase in interest rate	3.81%	5.00%	4.20%	0.04%	This would increase the average interest rate payable from 4.16% shown in L6 to 4.20%	Y
This relates risk management principles to the monitoring of the TM strategy. It measures the effect of a change in interest rates and the effect it may have on the capital financing costs.							
L8	Average interest rate received on STI vs. At Call rate	-11.22%	35.00%	4.39%	-30.61	-87.46%	N
L9a	AT call investments	2.05%	2.50%	4.33%	1.83	73.20%	Y
L9b	Short Term Investments	1.82%	3.75%	4.52%	0.77	20.53%	Y
L9c	Long Term Investments	0.83%	4.00%	5.01%	1.01	25.25%	Y
L9d	Property Fund Investments	3.89%	3.56%	3.99%	0.43	12.08%	Y
L10	Average interest rate on all ST investments (ST and AT call)	1.89%	3.39%	4.42%	1.03	30.50%	Y
L11a	Average rate on all investments (ex. Property fund)	1.81%	3.48%	4.44%	0.96	27.66%	Y
L11b	Average rate on all investments (inc. property fund)	2.11%	4.54%	4.35%	-0.19	-4.11%	N
L12	% daily bank balances within target range	99%	99%	99%	0.00	0.00%	Y
This measures how good our daily cash flow prediction is. A figure of 98% and above indicates a high level of accuracy.							

Appendix 10 – Performance data relating to demand within Adult Social Care

Reviews

Service users should receive a minimum of one planned review in a 12-month period, additionally unplanned reviews take place for several reasons. The number of reviews carried out each has increased from an average of 61 per week in July 2022 to an average of 88 per week in July 2023. The rate of reviews dipped at the end of the calendar year but have been consistently higher than average since February 2023 as shown in the graph below.



A piece of work is currently underway to assess the impact of reviews in the current year. Previously reported figures were based on data held within a performance dashboard but there is some doubt about the validity of that information. There is work underway to revise that dashboard, in the meantime, finance are working to evaluate the impact through a manual data analysis exercise.

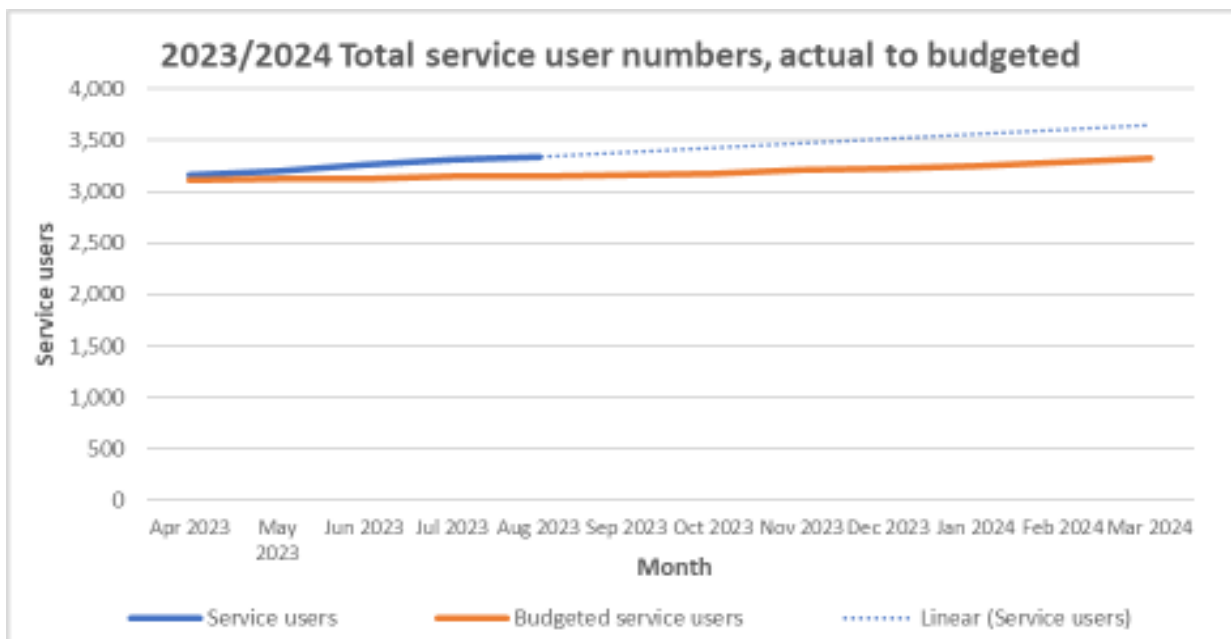
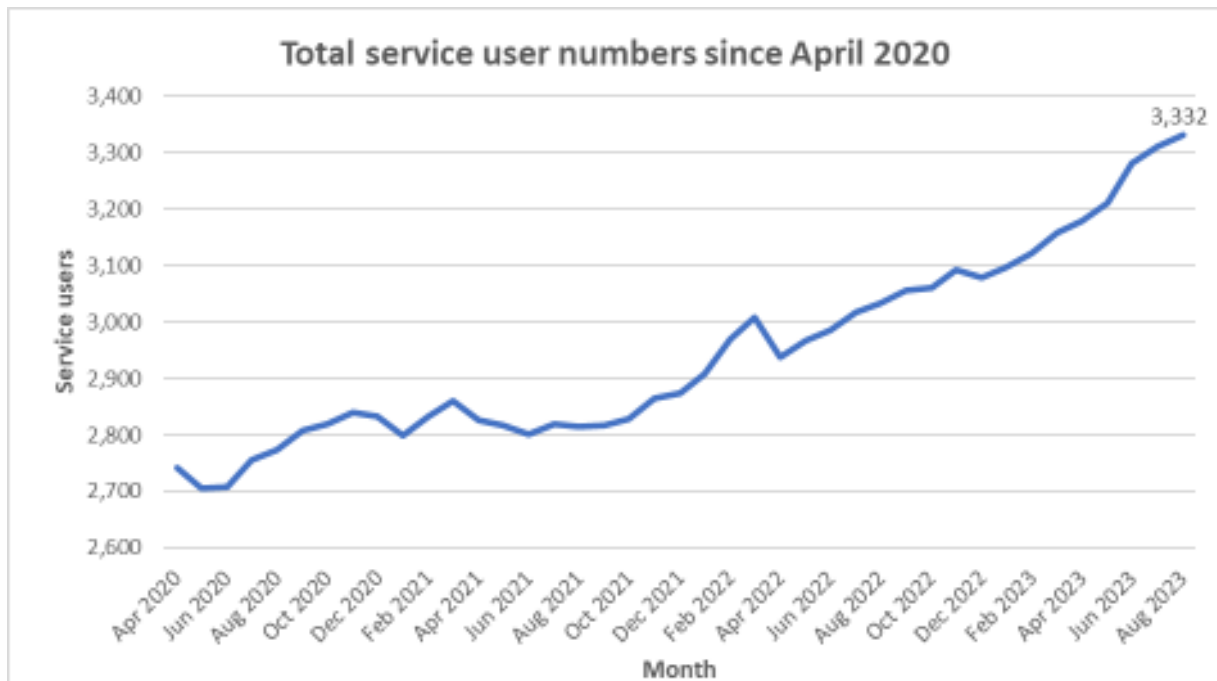
Service User Numbers

Attrition rate (current year effect)

	Budgeted (Apr to Jul)			Actual (Apr to Jul)			Variance (Apr to Jul)		
	Number	Value £	Average £	Number	Value £	Average £	Number	Value £	Average £
New service users	701	15,387,462	21,951	769	16,566,745	21,543	68	1,179,283	
Deceased service users	(306)	(6,131,341)	20,037	(208)	(4,914,692)	23,628	98	1,216,649	
Ended service users	(385)	(8,317,141)	21,603	(355)	(6,048,499)	17,038	30	2,268,642	
TOTALS	10	938,980		206	5,603,554		196	4,664,574	

The table above shows that the number of new service users on 31st August 2023 is 68 higher than had been budgeted, based on historical trends. For both deceased and ended service users the figures are much lower than budgeted which is resulting in there currently being 196 more service users in receipt of care than budgeted.

Some work has been carried out to identify the factors behind these lower numbers and part of the reasons include fewer deaths occurring in Walsall for the same period this year when compared to last year, fewer service users transferring to 100% health funding (S117) and fewer service users becoming self-funding.



Average costs

The last graph shows the average, full year costs for each care setting for the most recent 12-month period. The averages for 2022/23 have been increased by the 2023/24 uplift percentages to allow for a true comparison between the two years.

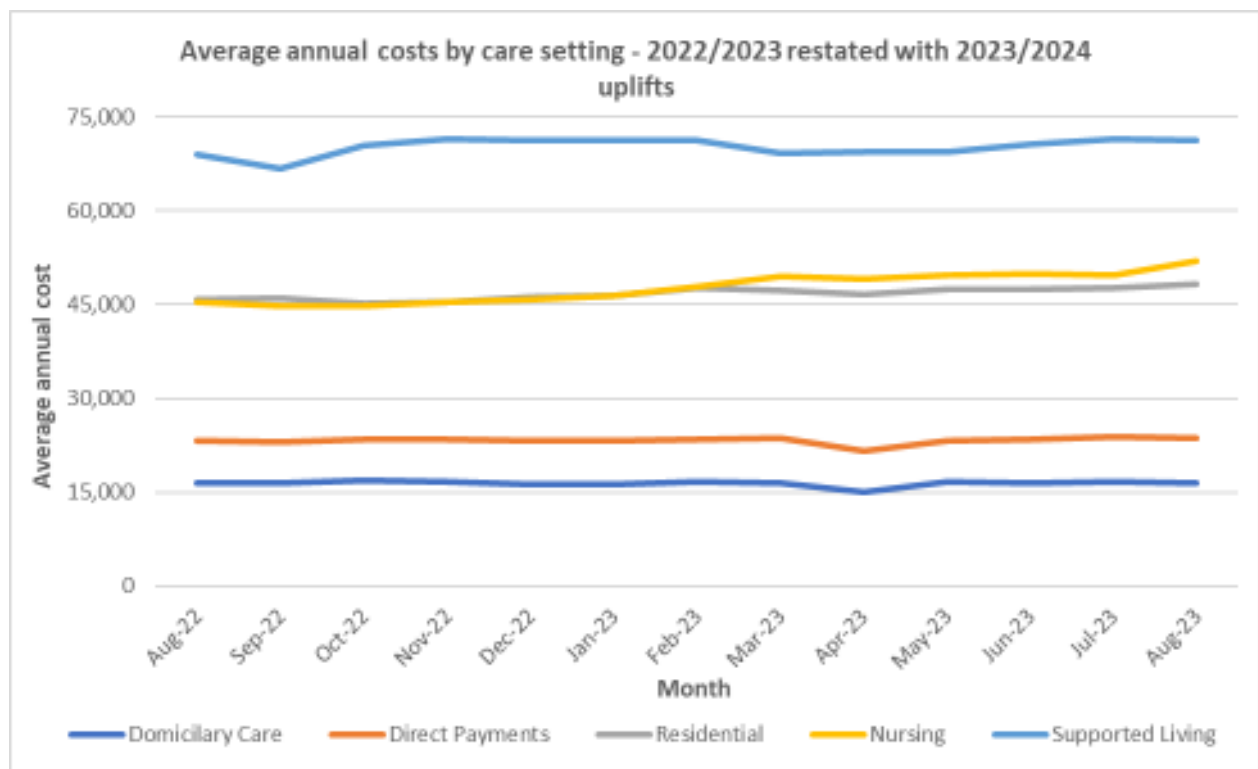
The two lower cost settings are domiciliary care and direct payments, and these are the two reporting the most stable average costs with -0.02% decrease and 2.001% increases.

Conversely, the higher cost settings are residential and nursing care (shown as separate lines) and supported living, and these show the largest increase in average costs. Increases are between 3.01% and 14.30%.

The largest increase has been seen in nursing care; additional work is required to understand the cohort that is contributing to this increase.

These increases are likely due to several factors:

- The effect of increases following review;
- Prices pressures from new residential and nursing placements;
- Possible increase due to fewer service users leaving care, these are generally the higher cost packages and placements due to increased length of care, complexity and cost, with fewer of these there is the likelihood that they are part of the reason for increasing average costs.



Care setting	Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Change £	Change %
Domiciliary Care	16,561	16,558	-3	-0.02%
Direct Payments	23,156	23,632	476	2.06%
Residential	45,706	48,177	2,471	5.41%
Nursing	45,497	52,001	6,504	14.30%
Supported Living	69,086	71,166	2,081	3.01%

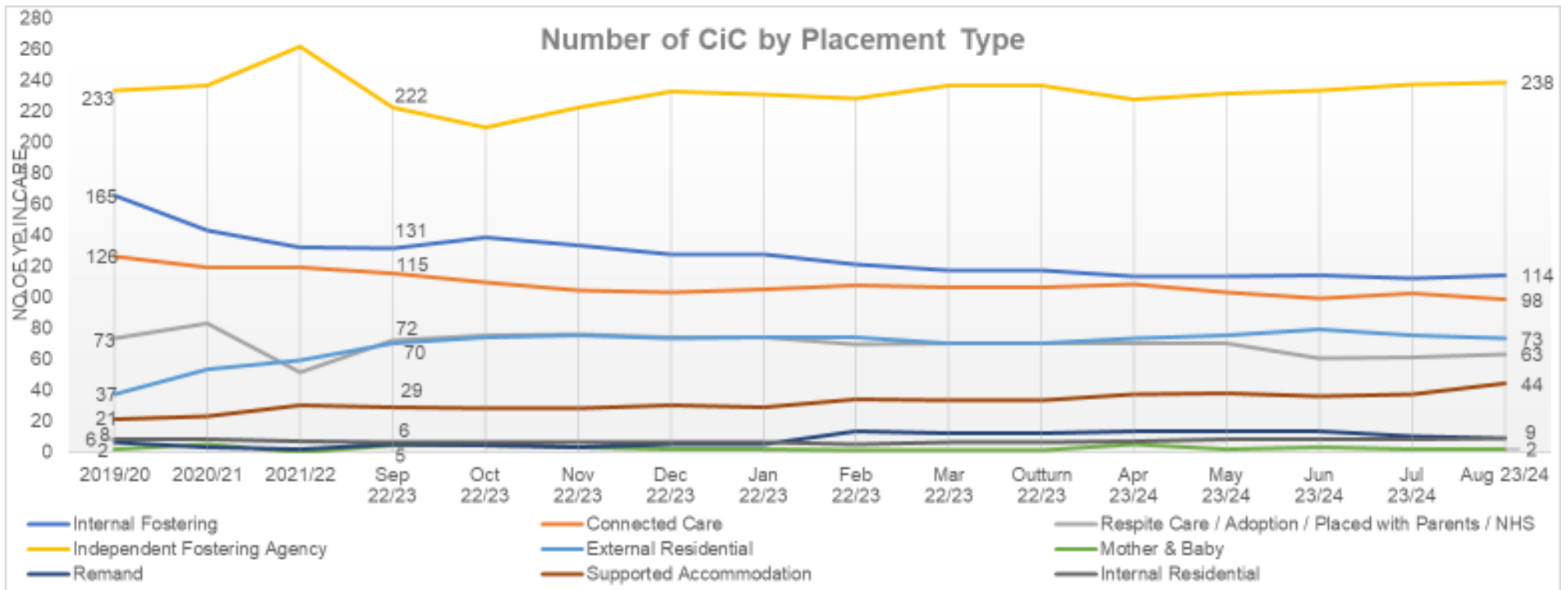
Appendix 11 – Performance data relating to demand within Children’s Services

Number of Children in Care by Placement Type

Year	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	Aug 22/23	Sep 22/23	Oct 22/23	Nov 22/23	Dec 22/23	Jan 22/23	Feb 22/23	Mar 22/23	Apr 23/24	May 23/24	Jun 23/24	Jul 23/24	Aug 23/24
Total CiC	671	673	661	656	654	647	650	652	652	652	651	653	653	645	644	650

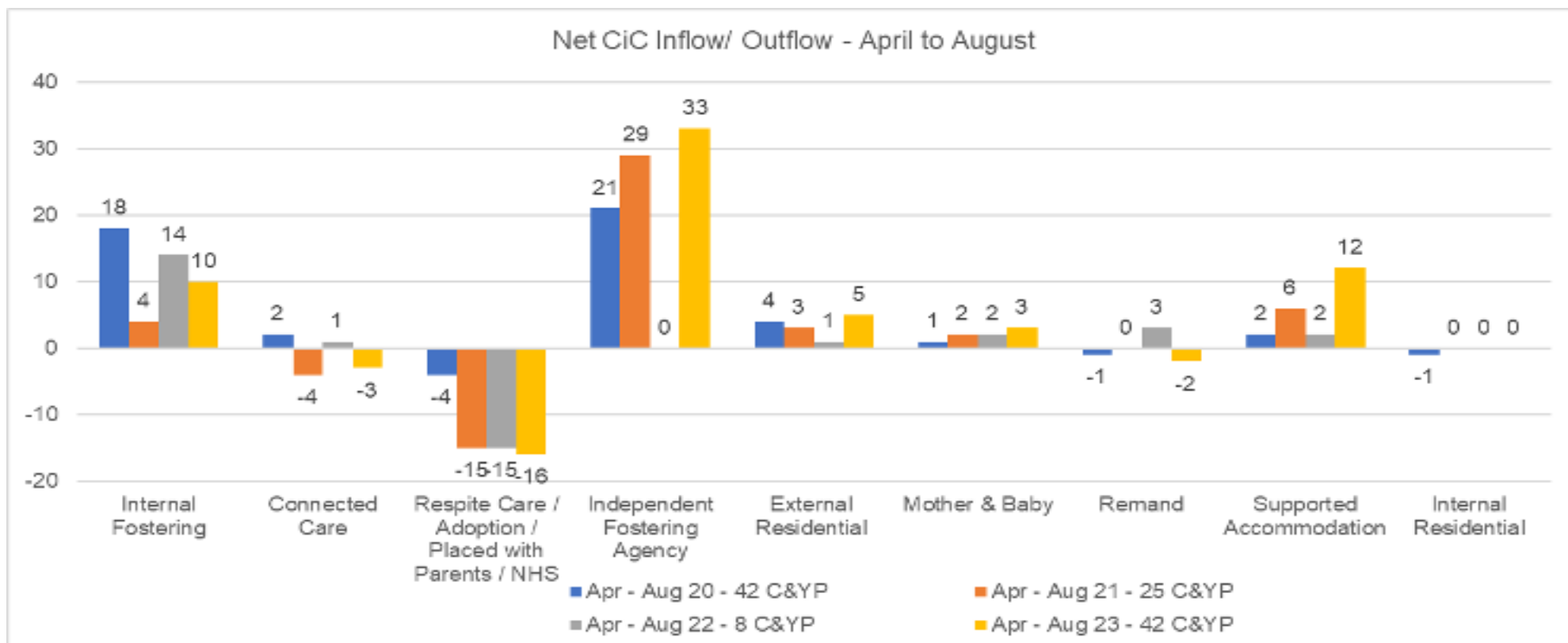
Despite the overall number of children in care and net inflow/outflow of C&YP in Walsall decreasing and beginning to stabilise through the implementation of the services transformation plans, the overall costs relating to children in care have increased.

The introduction of new legislation for non-Ofsted registered placements; a rising number of large sibling groups; an increasing number of complex children; together with a higher proportion of children in care over the age of 15 are all factors which have contributed to the increased demand within the market and continuing placement sufficiency pressures.



The graph above shows how although the number of CiC has decreased, the reliance on higher cost placements such as independent fostering agencies (IFA's) and external residential has increased over the 12 month and 4-year period, with the number of IFA placements increasing from 222 in September 2022 to 238 in August 2023 and number of external residential / mother and baby placements increasing from 70 to 73. In comparison the number of C&YP in lower cost placements has reduced, with the number of Internal Fostering placements decreasing from 131 to 114 and number of Connected Carer placements reducing from 115 to 98. This increased reliance on these placement types is also seen within the inflow figures for this financial year.

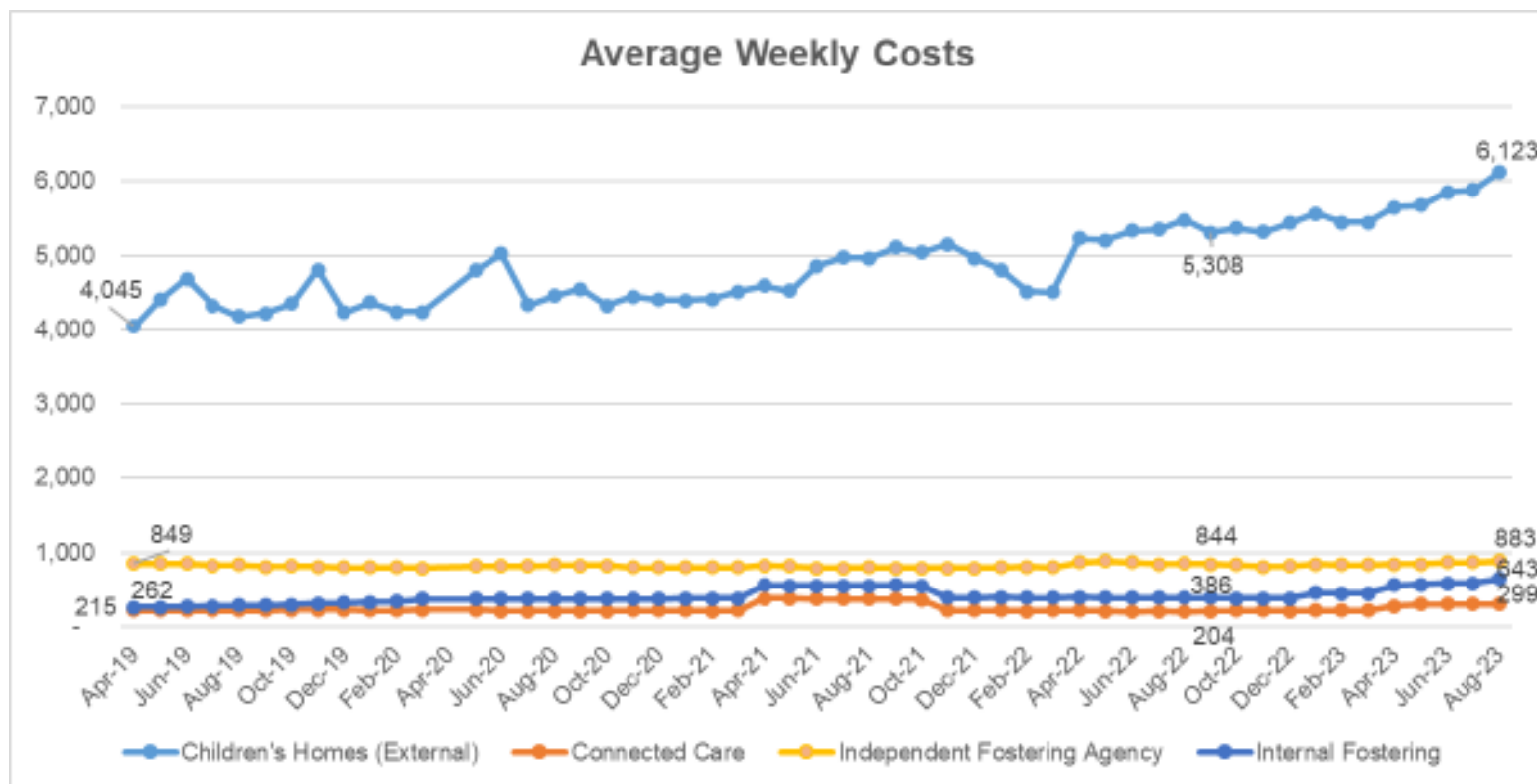
This increased reliance on these placement types is also seen within the net inflow/ outflow figures for this financial year. The table below illustrates the net CiC inflow/ outflow to date for 2023/24 and the prior three-year inflow trends:



As the chart demonstrates above, the net number of C&YP entering and leaving care has risen in line with 2020/21 to 42 and is over and above 2021/22 (25 C&YP), and 2022/23 (8 C&YP). It also demonstrates how there is an increased reliance for IFA, External Children’s Homes and Mother and Baby Units placements this financial year in comparison to previous years. To note, the growth in Supported Accommodation placements primarily relates to the increased intake of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, however this pressure has been offset by additional UASC income.

This increased inflow and change in reliance of placement types is over and above the trends that have been seen in prior years and the allocated inflow budget and has therefore created a pressure of £1.70m. The position as at period 6, assumes these trends will continue for the remainder of the financial year creating a pressure of £1.1m. This pressure has been fully offset by corporate reserves. This pressure has also been impacted through continued increases to the average weekly cost.

The chart below shows the average weekly cost of the four most utilised placement types for Walsall's CiC. The average weekly cost for an external residential placement has significantly increased from £4k to £6.1k (51%) over the last 4 financial years, and from £5.3k 12 months ago. This is significantly higher than the average weekly cost of an Internal Fostering placement of £643 p/w and Connected Care placement of £299 p/w.



In recognition of the financial impacts above, the service has focussed on stepping C&YP down to lower cost placements where possible. To date there has been 59 placement step downs with further step downs planned for the remainder of the financial year. These cost reductions have reduced the impact of the placement breakdowns and step ups seen to date, which have been financially heightened due to the placement sufficiency issues described above.

Cabinet – 18 October 2023

Council Plan: Markers of Success Q1 23/24

Portfolio:	Councillor M. Bird – Leader of the Council
Related portfolios:	All
Service:	Policy & Strategy Unit
Wards:	All
Key decision:	Yes
Forward plan:	Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To report on Quarter 1 of the 2023/24 Council Plan Markers of Success – highlighting achievements for that period and any support requirements to ensure the Markers are met.

2. Summary

- 2.1. The Council Plan was published In May 2022 and continues to present Walsall’s intention to focus on the five (5) EPICC¹ priorities, which were first introduced in the 2018/21 publication.
- 2.2. These priorities are underpinned by 10 outcomes and each outcome has two Markers of Success.
- 2.3. These 20 Markers of Success are the tools to measure performance throughout 2023/24, which informs the Council, Walsall residents and businesses and provides data/information to review and monitor throughout the year.
- 2.4. The performance for each Marker of Success will be reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis.
- 2.5. This Paper is the report on the Markers of Success, covering the period April – June 2023 (i.e. Quarter 1).

¹ Economic growth, People, Internal focus, Children, Communities

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That Cabinet note the performance in Q1 relating to the period April-June 2023.
- 3.2. That Cabinet note any key achievements, identified interdependencies and support required to achieve the Outcomes, set out in this report.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1. A three-year [Council Plan](#) for 2022-25 was approved by Council and published in May 2022.
- 4.2. The Council Plan sets out 5 areas of focus (EPICC), 10 outcomes and 20 markers of success to assess performance and progress in delivery of the plan.
- 4.3. The quarterly reports present the Council directorates' performance in relation to the agreed areas of focus (*see priorities and outcomes below*)

Council Plan priorities

- 4.4. The five Council Plan priorities and ten outcomes:

Priorities:	Outcomes:
Economic: enable greater local opportunities for all people, communities and businesses	1. Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place
	2. Education, training and skills enable people to contribute to their community and our economy
People: encourage our residents to lead active, fulfilling and independent lives to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing	3. People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home
	4. People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing and quality of life
Internal focus: Council services are customer focused effective, efficient and equitable	5. We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use
	6. The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring
Children: have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well	7. Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential
	8. Children grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere

Communities: empower our communities so that they feel they are connected and belong in Walsall, creating safe and healthy places whilst building a strong sense of community	9. Our communities will be more resilient and supportive of each other
	10. People are proud of their vibrant town, districts and communities

- 4.5. Responsibility for reporting performance against the Council Plan lies with the Policy & Strategy Unit. This allows the teams across the Hub to work closely with services to develop an insightful understanding of performance to help drive the achievement our outcomes.
- 4.6. It has been agreed that the existing Markers of Success will be continued for 2023/24, alongside the development of an improved performance reporting framework and process. The new process will ensure that existing extensive data sets are more thoroughly utilised in the reporting process, with the data collected in the new framework designed to be more accessible, relevant, and autonomously collected. The development of new Markers of Success aims to ensure that data collected for the performance report is specific to the outcome, understandable for both an internal and external demographic and finally easy to collect - reducing the reliance on stakeholders when procuring information.
- 4.7. The goal of the redevelopment of the performance reporting framework is to facilitate improved conversations between stakeholders regarding performance across the council. We want the framework to become more of an open loop of communication and feedback, one which allows for dialogue across all stakeholders as to how to improve data quality and the presentation of data itself.
- 4.8. The process for developing the new MoS is currently underway with an initial focus on the redevelopment of the 'Economic' Markers of Success. This area has been prioritised as there is a vast array of data available in this area, with a clear understanding of the intentions and vision regarding this priority area. Throughout 23/24 the P&S Unit will be collaborating with Business Insights to develop the new MoS, updates on this work will be presented in future quarters. To allow for continuity, the current MoS will be used and reported in the same format as in 22/23, until the new MoS are fully developed and approved across all 5 EPICC priorities.
- 4.9. Each Marker of Success has an agreed baseline, the 'point zero' from which this year's Outcomes will continue to be measured. Each quarter, a template questionnaire is completed by the named 'data owner', and signed off by a director, which then populates the Dashboard.
- 4.10. Following adoption of the Council Plan 2022/25, some of the Outcomes and Markers of Success have been revised and the measures reported last year no longer reflect the Outcome. Where this is the case, new measures and baselines have been developed with Directors and data owners.

- 4.11. The summary below shows overall progress against targets. The majority of outcomes have either met or exceeded the target set or are on course to do so by the end of 23/24 (including some outcomes where measures are still being developed and a narrative update has been provided). Any specific challenges with performance or availability of data are identified the relevant Markers of Success in appendix 1.

Performance	Qtr 1	
Green	8	MoS met / exceeded target
Amber	10	MoS close / on track to achieving target
Red	1	MoS did not achieve target
Grey	1	Data/information not yet available

There will be a change in the template from Q2 onwards requiring data owners/directors to include an approved RAG rating - and justification for this - against each Marker of Success overall.

- 4.12. Overall performance compared with last year will be possible once returns are available for all priorities and further Key Achievements will be included as an appendix should additional data be provided.
- 4.13. Data owners were also asked to identify 'interdependencies' alongside performance returns. While these are clearly understood for some Markers of Success, this is not the case across all, so gives only a partial picture of the work that is happening. Going forward, a more complete set of interdependencies will be identified and expanded, to fully understand the directorates' focus on building and developing partnerships, internally and externally, to optimise service delivery. These will be included in a future quarterly performance report.

Risk management

- 4.14. Risks have been identified with regards to submitting quarterly and updating data for the agreed quarterly returns:
- i. Incomplete / current data unavailable,
 - ii. Resource constraints e.g. staffing,
 - iii. Unexpected demands e.g. having to redirect capacity elsewhere to respond to changing circumstances.
- 4.15. Directors have identified what actions they will be taking and what additional support is required next quarter to achieve the 2023/24 Marker. These risks will be regularly reviewed.

Financial implications

- 4.16. There are no specific financial implications of this report.

Legal implications

- 4.17. There are no direct legal implications from this report.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.18. There are no direct procurement implications from this report.

Property implications

- 4.19. There are no direct property implications from this report.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.20. Achieving the Outcomes published will contribute significantly to having a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of our residents and staff.
- 4.21. The importance of continuing to closely monitor these Measures of Success is acknowledged by all stakeholders.

Staffing implications

- 4.22. There are no direct staffing implications from this report.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.23. The implications for and ability to reducing inequalities were considered when agreeing the Measures of Success for the Council Plan.
- 4.24. Every successful Outcome will contribute to reducing inequalities in the Borough and supporting residents and staff desires to maximise their potential.

Climate Change

- 4.25. There are no direct implications to climate change from this report.

Consultation

- 4.26. Council directors discuss the Measures of Success at Directors' Group and submit the data for the quarterly returns, which informs and populates the Dashboard and appendices.

5. Decide

Cabinet agrees to the continuation of reviewing and reporting on the Markers of Success in this format on a quarterly basis in order for the Council to monitor the Outcomes outlined in the 2022-25 Council Plan, which will inform Cabinet on the 2022-25 forward plan.

6. Respond

Progress on Markers of Success is currently monitored through the Corporate Management Team on a quarterly basis prior to submission to Cabinet.

7. **Review**

Updates will be collated and presented to Cabinet on a quarterly basis.

Background papers - none

Annexes:

Appendix 1 Q1 Markers of Success Dashboard

Author

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Kerrie Allward
Executive Director
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub

6 October 2023



Councillor Bird
Leader of the Council

6 October 2023

Council Plan Performance Reporting: Q1 23/24

	Outcome	Marker of Success	Lead Director(s)	Performance / Data owner contacts	Baseline measures - updated for 22/23	Qtr2: Jun - Sep 2022	Qtr3: Sep - Dec 2022	Qtr4: Jan - Mar 2023	Qtr1: Apr - Jun 2023	Q1 Comment / Progress achieved to date
ECONOMY	1. Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place	1a. Better connectivity, improved reliability and well maintained transport networks creating an environment where businesses are supported to thrive and grow	David Moore	Richard Pohribnyj	Highways condition: free from defects (Source: Safety Inspections Monitor, Tarmac Contract KPI, UTC Dashboard)	G	G	G	(G)	<p>"1. Highway safety inspections completed on time = 100% 2. Emergency defects attended to within 1 hour = 100% 3. Number of Urgent traffic signal faults repaired within time by contractor (%) = 100% 4. Number of Non-Urgent traffic signal faults repaired within time by contractor (%) = 99% 5. Traffic signal inspections completed on time = 100%"</p>
				Simon Tranter (Dan Turner)	Business Engagements (Source: Evolutive CRM & Walsall Works Records)	G	G	G	(G)	<p>This period saw the winding down of ERDF funded businesses support programmes such as AIM for Gold in Walsall. This meant that the team were heavily focused on ensuring relevant paperwork was completed by businesses who had been on the programme, rather than focusing on generating new leads for the team. •Q1 also saw further meetings and progress on the launch of new business support programmes through UKSPF and the Business Growth West Midlands agenda. •Q1 saw members of the Business Growth team engage with strategic businesses such as ASSA ABLLOY and RAC. •Majority of engagements were still focused on Access to Finance inquiries and supporting businesses through a particularly testing period owing to increasing inflationary pressures.</p> <p>Business Intelligence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •From a business intelligence perspective and what the team are hearing on the ground, businesses still report pressures from increasing inflation and difficulty in recruiting high level, skilled staff. •Businesses also report increasing wage pressures as a lag on profitability
		1b. Regenerating the borough to support places where people are proud to live and work, delivering affordable homes and attracting inward investment	David Moore	Simon Tranter (Joel Maybury)	Progress on the delivery of a range of development projects that will provide new housing and employment floorspace and enhance the town and district centres with a total package of investment of circa £500m	G	G	G	G	<p>Remediation of the 18ha SPARK site is on programme to complete in early/mid 2024. The site is now being jointly marketed to potential occupiers and a launch event for property agents was held in April 2023. In addition, a first community newsletter was distributed to provide information on the project to local people. The site will be developed for circa 620,000sqft of new employment floorspace located directly adjacent to the M6 between J9 and J10 providing around 1100 jobs; pre-development work for the nearby Council owned former Gasholders site is progressing following Cabinet approval in December 2022, with the objective of developing a high quality employment scheme which can deliver circa 250,000sqft of new floorspace; implementation of the Willenhall Framework Plan is ongoing with work underway to progress Phase 1 at Moat Street / Villiers Street for development of circa 106 new homes. The development partner procurement process is ongoing and there has been a positive response from the market while the Outline Planning Application is being determined by the LPA; work is nearing completion on a Strategic Delivery Plan for the Walsall Gateway residential opportunity area located to the north of the town centre which can provide circa 500 new homes; the Council has been awarded £11.4m from Future High Street Fund for the Connected Gateway project and detailed design work is now underway; work is taking place to progress projects that are part of both Walsall and Bloxwich Town Deals with £23.5m awarded to each area respectively. The opportunities for investment offered by Walsall Town Centre and the M6 J10 Cluster formed part of the West Midlands Investment Prospectus which was launched in May 2023.</p>
	2. Education, training and skills enable people to contribute to their community and our economy	2a. Provide access to education, apprenticeships and training to improve productivity and skills	David Moore	Simon Tranter (Jane Kaur Gill)	Walsall Apprentices on programme (BC Data Cube, April 2021)	G	G	G	(G)	<p>In the 2021/22 academic year there were 1,910 apprenticeship starts in Walsall, an increase of 9.8% (+170) since 2020/21. Nationally, apprenticeship starts were up 8.6% from 2020/21 (to a total of 349,190 in 2021/22).</p> <p>Comparisons on previous years show the difference in apprenticeship starts: 2,310 apprenticeship in a full year August 2018/ July 2019 1,910 apprenticeships in a full year August 2021 / July 2022 1,420 apprenticeship starts in a three quarter period August 2022 / April 2023 This trajectory suggest it's likely that full year will reach approx 2,000 or more apprenticeship starts.</p>
		2b. Reducing unemployment through collaborative working with employers and partners	David Moore	Simon Tranter (Jane Kaur Gill)	Walsall Universal Credit Claimant Data (ONS, March 2021)	A	A	A	(A)	<p>Walsall Total Claimants Data shows the past trend for the borough The trend of unemployment claimants (Aged 16+) has now returned closer to pre-pandemic levels. Levels over the past year have remained stable: 9,525 (4.3% of pop. aged 16+) July 2022 9,810 (4.4% of pop. aged 16+) July 2023</p> <p>Walsall is joint 30th highest local authority area. Out of 20 wards within Walsall, 10 were at or above the UK average of 3.8%. The wards with the highest proportion of claimants were Pleck, St Matthew's, Birchills Leamore and Darlston South.</p>

PEOPLE	3. People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home	3a. People are supported to build on their strengths and those in their communities to sustain their independence.	Jennie Pugh	Anne Doyle / Tina James/Paul Calder/Donna Gyde	Our success will be measured by the percentage of people approaching the Council for support who are successfully redirected to universally accessible community-based support to meet their needs	G	G	G	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •3324 people were signposted to universally accessible community support services such as pendant alarm services, physiotherapy services, GPs and housing providers. 1272 people were signposted during Q1 2022/23 giving a 4.1% increase in Q1 for 2023/24 •294 of 315 (61.6%) of people not previously in receipt of long-term support who exited reablement services made no further request for ongoing support. The percentage of people not requiring support following a reablement episode has shown a downward trajectory from 68.5% at the end of Q1 22/23 to 61.6% at the end of Q1 2023/24 •216 carers received support in the form of advice and guidance or replacement care. The number of carers in receipt of support has seen a 18% decrease on the equivalent period for 2022/23
		3b. People feel safe in their home and community	Jennie Pugh	Anne Doyle /Tina James/Paul Calder/Donna Gyde	Our success will be measured by the percentage of people who report as part of their annual review, that assessed need delivered through community based services is contributing to feeling safe	G	G	G	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Of the 192 safeguarding concerns concluded during the period where a risk was identified, the risk was removed or reduced in 172 (89.6%) cases. Safeguarding concerns where the risk identified was reduced or removed has seen a 4.1% increase from 85.5% in 2022/23 to 89.6% in Q1 of 2023/24 •2546 people were supported to live independently at home during the quarter via the provision of a long-term community-based service a 7.4% increase in the number of people supported to live at home independently. 2546 at the end of Q1 2023/24 from 2371 people supported at the equivalent point in 2022/23. The components of services being received in Q1 2023/24 (please note a single person may receive more than one component) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1510 received directly commissioned domiciliary care, 668 were supported via a direct payment, 271 were residing in a supported living placement, 118 in extra care housing and 59 in a shared lives placement
	4. People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing and quality of life	4a. People know how to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing and get timely support for this, where required.	Jennie Pugh/Stephen Gunther	Emma Thomas/Paulette Myers	Our success will be measured by outputs from the Healthy Lifestyle single wellbeing service, and aligned to development of the wider Wellbeing Outcomes Framework	G	G	G	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following a successful tender a Well Being Service provider has awarded a contract until 2030 •2092 People accessed the service •352 received more intensive targeted support •Average mental wellbeing score (measure through WHO-5 validated questionnaire) for those that completed targeted support increased from 54.2 at assessment to 63.5 at completion
		4b. People can access timely social care support and reablement to prevent a hospital admission or facilitate a timely discharge	Jennie Pugh	Kerrie Thorne/Matt White	Success will be measured by a reduction in emergency admissions and delayed transfers of care attributable to ASC - linked to ICS and reablement figures	G	G	G	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During Q1 - 137 people were referred as hospital avoidance cases The Outcomes for people referred for hospital avoidance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •10 people were fast tracked (Pathway 4) •23 people were Pathway 0 - signposted to other services and did not require care or reablement •301 people were admitted to Pathway 1 for reablement •7 people were admitted to Pathway 2 into a bed-based rehab facility •8 people were admitted to Pathway 3 for ongoing health and social care assessments in a bed-based facility During Q1 – 837 people were referred as hospital discharge cases onto Pathway 1 (Reablement in the community) Total = 974 people discharged via community reablement, or admission avoided in Q1 of 23/24
INTERNAL	5. We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use	5a. Services will be accessible and easy to use with improved customer satisfaction	Elise Hopkins	Michelle Dudson/Michael Taylor	Infrastructure and tools to monitor on-going customer satisfaction are still under development. These are anticipated to be available when the right resources are in the Hub, and when we have introduced the additional functionality available in the Genesis Cloud system (and later on CRM). A quarterly progress update will be provided. Proxy baselines may be available from the annual customer survey.	A	A	A	(A)	Customer satisfaction survey has gone live but currently requires manual requests for survey completion to be sent out by the Customer Advisors, further work to be carried out to enable automated surveys to be sent following customer calls. Survey feedback to date QTD 94 surveys completed, NPS 65, CCSAT 89.36%
		5b. Customers and partners report that they would recommend working with us in the future	Elise Hopkins		Annual proxy measures to be used - sustaining/improving on performance from 21/22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % of adult social care users reporting that the services they receive make them feel safer (85.8%) - % of people raising safeguarding alerts reporting that they achieved their desired outcome (88.8%) 	A	A	A		This measure has been reported against in previous quarters based on an annual survey response, which captured the views of only a small subset of service users in adult social care. Policy & Strategy Unit are currently focussing on the effectiveness of the measures within the Internal Focus priority as part of their work to overhaul the Corporate Performance Reporting process and ensure it supports performance-driven conversations. This will include understanding the Key Performance Indicators used elsewhere (for example to monitor our Proud Promises and our Enabling and Support Services workstream). Replacement measures will be explored as a priority and introduced in future quarters.

	6. The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring	6a. Services will provide value for money measured through delivery of outcomes within agreed resources	Shaun Darcy	Vicky Buckley	Delivering on our 3 Proud Promise measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved outcomes and customer experience from current level of 73% to 77% by Apr 23 Improved employee satisfaction and engagement from current level of 61% to 67% by Apr 23 Improved service efficiency and performance (deliver within approved budget and deliver Proud savings) 	A	A	A	A	Efficiencies Promise: Budget position and Outturn 2023/24: As at quarter 1, the reported corporate financial position indicated a potential council wide variance to budget of £14m, primarily arising from non delivery or delayed delivery of savings (£7.3m after mitigating actions) and pressures within adults social care demand costs. Actions to address these are currently being identified. Customer: N/A Employee: N/A
		6b. Services are trusted and customer focused measured through staff satisfaction/engagement scores.	Michele Leith	Michele Leith	Enabling Communication and Culture (ECC) work stream has been re-scoped, the themes in the new plan to be delivered include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updating the action plan developed after the staff survey A pay and reward review Workforce Strategy Organisation Development Strategy Culture Stocktake: where are we now? 	A	A	A	A	Enabling Communication & Culture (ECC) workstream meet regularly during the quarter and following the agreement of our Workforce and Organisational Development Strategies, and vision for our future Walsall culture, has been developing a focussed workplan, which will be finalised, approved and implemented in late 2023. The staff survey (in Autumn 2023) will provide a new benchmark against this outcome.
CHILDREN	7. Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential	% of children who attend good and outstanding schools	Colleen Male	Helena Kucharczyk (Dave Trask)	% of children who attend good and outstanding schools	G	G	G	G	88.9% of children attended good and outstanding schools as at 27/06/2023 - direction of travel - improving
					% of 16, 17 and 18 year olds who are not in Education, Employment and Training	G	G	G	A	As at June 2023 – 2.3% of young people are NEET, and 0.5% of young people are 'unknown', giving a total official figure of 2.8% - direction of travel – remains stable , significant work has been done to improve recording in this area.
		7a. Children and young people have access to high quality education and training opportunities and schools are more inclusive	Colleen Male	Helena Kucharczyk (Dave Trask)	% of children excluded from school (fixed term and permanent)	A	A	A	A	Primary Suspensions – 0.23% (62) an increase from 0.16% (42) when compared to April - June 2021-22 academic year - some increase within the term, but remaining within the parameters of the baseline Permanent – 0.00% (0) a decrease from 0.01% (4) when compared to April - June 2021-22 academic year - direction of travel - decreasing . Secondary Suspensions – 2.92% (553) an increase from 2.24% (417) when compared to April - June 2021-22 academic year - direction of travel – some increase within the term, but remaining within the parameters of the baseline Permanent – 0.06% (12) a decrease from 0.08% (15) when compared to April - June 2021-22 academic year - direction of travel – small decrease within the term, remaining within the parameters of the baseline
	7b. Children and young people with additional needs or in specific circumstances are identified and supported to have their health and education needs met.	Colleen Male	Helena Kucharczyk (Dave Trask)	% of Care Leavers who are in Education, Employment and Training	A	A	A	R	50% of care leavers aged 19 to 21 were in EET at the end of Jun 23 – direction of travel – decreasing from Q4 (54.1%) .	
				% of EHC assessments completed within 20 weeks	R	R	R	(R)	Between 1st January 2022 and 31st December 2022 - 8.5% of EHC assessments were completed within 20 weeks - direction of travel – decreasing . However, significant work has been undertaken in this area to improve and streamline the processes for undertaking EHC plans and the timeliness of decisions to assess and decisions to issue have improved significantly, as has the timeliness of advices received from health and other professionals during the assessment. The backlog has been cleared and timeliness of new assessments entering the system is improving. As a result of this early Q1 data against the 20 week target is already starting to demonstrate improvements. Between 1st April 2023 and 30th June 2023 - 51% of EHC assessments were completed within 20 weeks - direction of travel is improving .	
				% of children in care with up to date health assessment	A	A	A	(A)	As at the end of Jun 2023, 87.0% of children who have been in care for a continuous 12 months have had an up to date health assessment – direction of travel – increasing on Q4 .	
	8. Children grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere	8a. Services and support is responsive to needs of different communities, partners are proactive in responding to these needs and children and families have easier and timelier access to services.	Colleen Male	Helena Kucharczyk (Dave Trask)	% of social care contacts which lead to a referral	A	A	A	(A)	27.5% of requests for social care contacts led to a referral between 01/07/2022 and 30/06/2023 - direction of travel – decreasing from Q4
% of social care assessments completed within 45 days					G	G	G	(G)	87.5% of social care assessments were completed within 45 days from 1.7.22 to 30.6.23 this is a slight decrease on the Q4 (22/23) figure out-turn of 88.9% but remains stable and was significantly higher than statistical neighbours (80.0%), regional comparators (82.0%) and national out-turn (84.5%) 2021-22 outturns.	
8b. Children and families are better connected with community resources to					% of children and young people who contribute to their CP conferences	G	G	G	G	96.2% of children and young people who contribute to their CP conferences between 01/07/2022 – 30/06/2023 – direction of travel – fallen slightly from Q4 but within parameters of good performance
					% of children and young people who contribute to their LAC review	G	G	G	G	96.5% of children and young people in care contributed to their review between 01/07/22 – 30/06/23 – direction of travel – increasing on Q4

		connected with community resources to enable them to build resilience, are involved in developing their plans and can provide regular feedback.	Colleen Male	Helena Kucharczyk (Dave Trask)	Number / Rate per 10,000 of children entering care	G	G	G	(G)	182 or 26.6 per 10,000 age 0-17 of children entered care between 01/07/22 – 30/06/23 - direction of travel – increasing from Q4 22/23 (166)
					Number of first time entrants into the criminal justice system	A	A	A	(A)	There has been an increase in the emergence of unaccompanied children since the use of Hotel in Walsall. The previous Quarters also saw an increase in the use of remand. 68 young people were first time entrants into the criminal justice system between 01/07/22 and 30/06/2023 – direction of travel – decreased slightly from 70 last quarter
COMMUNITIES	9. Our communities will be more resilient and supportive of each other	9a. There will be a vibrant and diverse community and voluntary sector providing help and support where people need it with a range of volunteering opportunities	Paul Gordon	Paul Gordon (Irena Hergottova)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of volunteering opportunities (One Walsall) - Development of improved and joint volunteering infrastructure (PG designing through new tender) - Number of new groups involved in voluntary sector (One Walsall) - Qualitative feedback 	A	A	A	(A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Number of volunteering opportunities ◦There are several opportunities available including the following volunteer roles: Activity Support, Drivers, Befrienders, Gardeners/ground maintenance, litter picks •The East locality VCS infrastructure lead are accredited in "Investors in Volunteers". Investing in Volunteers (iV) is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. This has allowed them to streamline processes and procedures to be able to effectively support volunteers. They have created a pathway for volunteers to be engaged and supported through their journey of volunteering that can be shared and utilised by the sector. The East locality have begun supporting several smaller VCS organisations to develop best practice when engaging with volunteers and supporting implementation of updated policies and procedures to enable them to engage with more Volunteers effectively. They have discussed how to engage more volunteers and implement effective ongoing training plans. They are also supporting them with training opportunities for their staff and volunteers. •Development of improved and joint volunteering infrastructure ◦The new locality based infrastructure support model was launched in May 2023. The new model has gone through a transition phase with new staff being recruited in the locality to support and champion the VCS sector in their locality. Each locality have proactively been making contact with organisations and offering a variety of support including setting up new charities, developing policies and procedures and researching funding opportunities. •Number of new groups involved in voluntary sector ◦The North Locality have undertaken a mapping exercise and mapped and found and communicated with 50 groups including faith groups, 2 centres have now been set up as litter pick resource centres, and the development of a volunteer database is being looked at, to help connect volunteers. ◦The East Locality have begun work of getting to know more about the sector in the area including the small grassroots organisations that do such fantastic work in the heart of their communities. This allows them to take a true flavour of the VCS to these committees that can help shape policy in Walsall, influence decision makers at a local level and provide valuable information of key challenges for the sector from grassroots level.
		9b. Trust will be built within and between communities across the Borough	Paul Gordon	Paul Gordon (Irena Hergottova)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involvement of CVS (excluding One Walsall) in anchor organisation committees - Qualitative feedback 	A	A	A	(A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Involvement of VCS in anchor organisation committees ◦Peer review and governance review of committees, with support for new emerging groups as well. ◦Family Hubs Steering Group ◦Walsall Together Resilient Communities ◦Team Walsall ◦Walsall Wellbeing framework ◦Walsall Together volunteering network •Attendance at strategic meetings has allowed the sector to start to have a true representation within seats in committees that have a wider impact on the residents of Walsall. •The opportunities of attending these groups are vitally important for the VCSE sector to enable collaborative working and co-design with key anchor organisations to truly impact on Walsall residents and the issues currently affecting Walsall.
	10. People are proud of their vibrant town, districts and communities	10a. The Borough's streets are clean, green and welcoming, with more waste recycled and less going to landfill	Kathryn Moreton	Joanne Cockbill	% of household waste by disposal method (reuse/recycle/composting; energy recovery; landfilled)	A	A	A	(A)	% HH waste sent for re-use, recycling or composting in Q4 was 39.8%, the annual figure for 22/23 was 25% (hence amber rating) % HH waste sent to landfill in Q4 was 13.49%, the annual figure for 22/23 was 7.16%. % HH waste sent for incineration with energy recovery was 45.93%, the annual figure was 58.5%
		10b. People feel safe in their local area and anti-social behaviour and crime – particularly environmental crime is reduced	Kathryn Moreton	Joanne Cockbill / Dave Elrington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How safe or unsafe do you feel when out and about in your local area during the day (77%) and after dark (26%) - baseline from WAW 2040 Residents' Survey. - Number/size/ type of Flytipping incidents dealt with by Clean and Green (Flycapture) 	A	A	A	(A)	Work and attainment has been fairly consistent in terms of the enforcement teams the significant results ie prosecutions often take months to come to completion and so it can be variable as to when the outcomes of cases can be seen. It is difficult to show increasing attainment on a quarter by quarter basis as there are many variable factors to enforcement cases.

Cabinet – 18 October 2023

The Armed Forces Act 2021 – New Statutory Duty Walsall Armed Forces Covenant 2023

Portfolio: Councillor M. Bird, Leader of the Council

Related portfolios: Councillor G. Perry, Deputy Leader Resilient Communities

Service: All

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Aim

To comply with the Armed Forces Act 2021 which places a new statutory duty upon some public bodies, including Local Authorities, to have regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when making decisions specifically in the areas of healthcare, housing and education.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The national Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation that those who serve or who have served in the armed Forces, and their families, will be treated fairly and will not be disadvantaged in accessing public and commercial services as a result of their military service.
- 2.2 The Armed Forces Act 2021 created a statutory duty on specified bodies, including Local Authorities, to have regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant in their policy development and decision making. The focus of the Duty is on local and regional service provision, covering aspects of education, healthcare and public housing that are most likely to affect the armed forces community.
- 2.3 The Cabinet previously approved a voluntary local Armed Forces Covenant in 2013 which included pledges to support the local armed forces community. As this is now ten years old, it is an opportune time to review and improve the Council's commitment.

- 2.4 A new local Covenant has been produced in conjunction with officers from across the Council who act as Armed Forces Covenant leads for their service area and the Council's Armed Forces Champion. This is attached as an **appendix** to the report.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes the Armed Forces Covenant statutory duty.
- 3.2 That the Walsall Council Armed Forces Covenant, appended to the report, be approved.
- 3.3 That authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Economy Environment and Communities in consultation with the Leader of the Council (or nominated Armed Forces Champion) to make amendments to the pledges contained in the local covenant to ensure that they remain current.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 Since 2011 there has been a national Armed Forces Covenant. It is a promise by the nation that those who serve or who have served in the armed Forces, and their families, will be treated fairly and will not be disadvantaged in accessing public and commercial services as a result of their military service, with special provision made in appropriate cases for those who have sacrificed the most. It is a recognition of the sacrifices they make on the nation's behalf and the responsibilities the nation owes them in return.
- 4.2 The government subsequently encouraged all local authorities and other private and public organisations to voluntarily produce and sign a local covenant setting out their commitments to their local armed forces community. Walsall Council's local Covenant was approved by Cabinet in 2013.
- 4.3 The Armed Forces Act 2021 amended the Armed Forces Act 2006 to impose the following legal obligation on specified bodies in the four home nations of the UK. "The Armed Forces Covenant Duty"

When a specified body exercises a relevant function, it must have due regard to: (a) the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces; (b) the principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces, and (c) the principle that special provision for Service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership of the Armed Forces.

- 4.4 The duty is about informed decision-making and means that specified bodies should consciously assess how their policy development and decision making might impact on service users from the armed forces community in scope.
- 4.5 The focus of the duty is on local and regional service provision, covering aspects of education, healthcare and public housing that are most likely to affect the armed forces community
- 4.6 The public bodies and functions in scope, each individually responsible for complying with the duty, are as follows:

Bodies in scope	Summary of Functions
<p>Education Local Authorities Compulsory education settings (primary, secondary and further education) including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing bodies of maintained and non-maintained schools, • non maintained special schools • Proprietors of academies • Governing bodies of FE institutions • Special post 16 institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions • Educational attainment and curriculum • Child wellbeing • Transport • Attendance • Additional needs support • Use of service pupil premium funding
<p>Healthcare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authorities • NHS England • Integrated Care Boards • NHS Trusts • NHS Foundation Trusts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of services • Planning and funding • Co-operation between bodies and professionals • LA delivered healthcare services including sexual health services and drug and alcohol misuse services • NHS primary care including GPs, community pharmacies, NHS dental NHS optometry and public health screening services • NHS secondary care services including urgent and emergency care, hospital and community services, specialist care, mental health services, additional needs services
<p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allocations policy for social housing. • tenancy strategies, • homelessness • Disabled Facilities Grants

- 4.7 The Armed Forces Community is identified as the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, The Army and Royal Air Force including Regulars, Reserves, former

members resident in the UK, immediate family members and the bereaved. Ministry of Defence (MOD) Guidance to local authorities encourages provision for separated and divorced spouses or civil partners as they transit out the armed forces community.

- 4.8 The 2021 Census included for the first time, a question of respondents over 16 years specifically aimed at understanding the nations veteran population: “*Have you previously served in the UK Armed forces*”. A veteran is anyone who has served for at least one day in the armed forces, whether regular or reserve or merchant mariners who have seen duty on defined military operations.
- 4.9 An evaluation of the responses by the Office for National Statistics shows that around 2.2% of the Walsall population identified as a veteran, around 6,500 people. (This relates to veterans and does not include any residents who are currently serving or their families).
- 4.10 The majority of service leavers do not encounter any difficulties transitioning into civilian life however, examples of challenges that some may face, including currently serving personnel, can be:

Education: An interrupted education due to relocations; school admissions, for example, longer journey time to school or more difficult journey if required to relocate; disrupted social experience; mental wellbeing; emotional and pastoral support; being unable to take holidays during normal school holidays; delays in support for service children with additional needs.

Healthcare: lack of awareness of healthcare professionals; loss of access to GP, dentist; joining new waiting lists following reassessments in new location; mental health and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), hearing loss, military family carers; loneliness.

Housing: lack of knowledge about housing services; not building up sufficient local connection; lack of suitable social housing that meet particular housing needs caused by injury sustained in service; welfare system; reluctance to seek early help to avoid homelessness; adaptations.

Other: employment – recognising transferrable skills, spousal employment - multiple short term employment history.

- 4.11 The MOD has produced a Local Authority Guide to deliver their local covenant and has suggested a minimum core infrastructure, essentially:
- An elected member champion
 - A lead officer
 - A webpage to signpost to support information
 - A clear public statement of support from the Council
 - Training of frontline staff
 - A mechanism for reporting of actions and achievements
 - An Action Plan to underpin the Council’s commitment

- A covenant partnership forum to include representatives of military, partner public sector bodies, senior elected members, forces charities.
- 4.12 All of the above have been in place in Walsall since 2013 with the exception of a current action plan which has lapsed. A new action plan will be produced following consultation with the community. The Council's webpage is currently being improved in consultation with the partnership forum.
- 4.13 Each specified body is responsible for complying with the duty however all do come together on many occasions in various partnership arenas, including the Armed Forces Partnership Board, where information, support and guidance is shared.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.14 The Covenant supports the overall aim of the Council that inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised. It also supports the following Council Plan priorities:

Economic - Enable greater local opportunities for all people, communities and businesses

People - Encourage our residents to lead more active, fulfilling and independent lives to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing

Internal focus - Council services are customer focused effective, efficient and equitable

Children - Have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well

Communities - Empower our communities so that they feel they are connected and belong in Walsall, creating safe and healthy places whilst building a strong sense of community

The armed forces covenant sits well as part of a suite of initiatives attached to the Council's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) strategy currently under development or being refreshed. It is a key part of the Strategy but will also have strong links with the other elements connected with the strategy. The related work under the Armed Forces Covenant will be built into the operational work across all parts of the Council.

Risk management

- 4.15 Whilst the Council could carry out its statutory duty without a local Covenant, the Government expects that every local authority will have a signed covenant to evidence its commitment, therefore there would be a reputational risk to the Council if it does not clearly articulate its commitment. The Council could also risk losing sight of this duty without that clear signed commitment.

Financial implications

- 4.16 The financial implications of delivering the Covenant are likely to be minimal and can be met from within existing budgets as part of normal business. It is intended to encourage community groups to champion the covenant through a small grants scheme which will be enabled through the Resilient Communities team and will be met from the available Resilient Communities budget.

Legal implications

- 4.17 The statutory duty came into effect in November 2022. The legislation and associated statutory guidance are not prescriptive about the approach a specified body should take in order to comply with their legal obligations. It does not mandate that any particular conclusions are reached or specific public service delivery outcomes achieved as a result of that consideration. Actions and outcomes that bodies deem appropriate will vary across the country depending on local circumstances. The duty does not abolish or replace existing covenant pledges or other commitments. The duty applies whether or not a local covenant has been produced.
- 4.18 Each specified body is individually responsible for complying with the new statutory duty.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.19 Where relevant functions have been contracted out to private companies or third sector organisations, the specified public body responsible for that function needs to ensure that any third parties exercising functions on their behalf comply with the Covenant Duty. The Council has therefore included a clause in its standard form goods and services contract precedent to specify that Providers must support the Council to comply with the Council's Armed Forces Covenant Duty.
- 4.20 Some of the Council's contractors already provide services around civic and remembrance events as part of their social value, such as traffic management. There is potential to draw on the social value of other contracts to support the delivery of the Covenant pledges.

Property implications

- 4.21 None arising from this report. Social housing providers in Walsall are required to comply with the covenant duty, both as organisations in their own right and also as a third party provider of Local Authority services.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.22 The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Walsall already references the Armed Forces community. Other health and wellbeing related policies will reflect the new duty upon review.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.23 The Covenant aims to remove disadvantage as a result of military service. Advantageous treatment as a matter of course is not with scope however, bodies are free to implement such schemes as part of their support pledges. It does not give an individual an automatic right to the best house, best school or jump a queue however. Special provision can sometimes be justified as set out elsewhere in the report.
- 4.24 The Council has included reference to the Armed Forces in its Equality Impact Assessments.

Staffing implications

- 4.25 Each relevant directorate has nominated service leads who share information and raises awareness of the covenant with their directorate teams, particularly front line staff.
- 4.26 The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme makes awards to employers that advocate, pledge and demonstrate support for Defence and the armed forces community and align their values and practices with the principles of the Covenant. Walsall Council currently holds a Bronze award. It is intended to work towards achieving a Silver award.
- 4.27 The Council's workforce strategy already includes support for reservists to undertake their training and deployments.

Climate Impact

- 4.28 None

Consultation

- 4.29 The proposed new pledges have been drawn from guidance to local authorities, best practice templates and discussions with the Council's service leads. The pledges have been shared with Walsall's Armed Forces Covenant Board.

5. Decide

Cabinet is asked to note the new statutory duty and approve the new Covenant and its updated pledges.

6. Respond

Following Cabinet approval, the Covenant will be formally launched and signed on 18 November 2023 in conjunction with an armed forces community networking event in the Town Hall which is being led by the Council's Armed Forces Champion. An action plan will be produced to track the delivery of the

pledges and the Council, through its Resilient Communities Team, will engage with the community to understand the challenges faced locally. Service leads will continue awareness raising to ensure that policy development and decision making takes account of the Covenant.

7. Review

Progress on the delivery of the Covenant will be reported to Walsall's Armed Forces Partnership Board alongside other partner covenants.

Appendix

Walsall Council's updated Armed Forces Covenant

Background papers

All published papers.

Resources drawn from MOD Covenant website [Home - Armed Forces Covenant](#)

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Lead officer Armed Forces Covenant
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Dave Brown
Executive Director

10 October 2023



Councillor Bird
Leader of the Council

10 October 2023



Walsall Council

We, the undersigned, commit to uphold the Armed Forces Covenant and support the Armed Forces Community. We recognise the contribution that Service personnel, both regular and reservist, veterans and military families make to our organisation, our community and to the country.

On behalf of Walsall Council

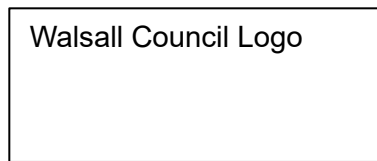
Councillor Adam Hicken
Walsall Council Armed Forces Champion

On behalf of People of Walsall

Councillor Chris Towe
Mayor of Walsall

On behalf of the Ministry of Defence

MOD Regional Covenant Lead





The Armed Forces Covenant

An Enduring Covenant Between

The People of the United Kingdom
His Majesty's Government

– and –

All those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown

And their Families

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces. In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most, such as the injured and the bereaved.

This obligation involves the whole of society: it includes voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty unites the country and demonstrates the value of their contribution. This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.

Section 1: Principles of The Armed Forces Covenant

1.1 Walsall Council will endeavour to uphold the key principles of the Armed Forces Covenant:

- *Members of the Armed Forces Community should not face disadvantages arising from their service in the provision of public and commercial services.*
- *In some circumstances special provision may be justified, especially for those who have given the most, such as the injured or bereaved.*

Section 2: Demonstrating our Commitment

We recognise the contribution that Service personnel, reservists, veterans, the cadet movement and military families make to our organisation, our community and to the country.

We will seek to uphold the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant by:

Promoting the Armed Forces:

- Ensuring that our front-line staff are trained to be aware of the Armed Forces Covenant to better identify and serve members of the Armed Forces Community.
- Being a forces friendly organisation and promoting this to our staff, customers, suppliers, contractors and wider public.
- Including a clause in the council's standard form goods and services contract precedent to specify that Providers must comply with the council's Armed Forces Covenant Duty.
- Engaging with and promoting the Defence Employer recognition scheme – an award which recognises positive actions taken by organisations which help to ensure that members of the Armed Forces community are not unfairly disadvantaged during recruitment and are supported in the workplace.
- Encouraging the integration of service life into civilian life and encouraging members of the Armed Forces community to help their local communities using the Councils Resilient Communities approach.
- Ensuring that the Council's template policy toolkit provides guidance on the extent to which the service personnel and their families are referenced in Council policies
- Including service personnel in Equality impact assessments
- Continuing to administer a Partnership Board with representatives of the Council's partner agencies and other relevant agencies to ensure that the pledges are consistent with pledges of partnership agencies across the borough and are delivered via a partnership action plan.

Providing employment support to members of the Armed Forces Community:

- Recognising and promote the skills of the Armed Forces Community, during engagements with local businesses and providing support in respect of self-employment and business startup.
- Recognising the considerable transferable skills that those with an Armed Forces background can bring to the delivery of Council services by offering a guaranteed interview scheme for all former UK service personnel who meet the minimum selection criteria in the employee specification.
- Supporting staff who are members of the reserve forces through the council's leave and time off policy by granting additional paid leave to attend the annual Reserve Forces summer camp and otherwise supporting additional non-continuous training, supporting any voluntary mobilisations subject to business need and accommodating compulsory deployments.
- Offering support to Cadet force adult volunteers by enabling them to offset their time through the Council's volunteering scheme
- Offering short notice leave to those whose partners are sent on short notice deployment.

Communications, engagement, and outreach:

- Using new population Census information to understand the extent and make-up of the Borough's Armed Forces Community to inform adequate, appropriate and targeted support and engagement with that community by the Council and its Partnership Board member agencies.
- Encouraging the Partnership Board member agencies to engage with a range of local stakeholders to monitor the delivery of their pledges.
- Where appropriate, using the covenant and employer recognition scheme award logo in our communications and marketing.
- Maintaining our dedicated Armed Forces webpage to inform and signpost to support networks (including coffee mornings, breakfast clubs) for veterans and other members of the Armed Forces Community and to promote the Defence Discount Service
- Ensuring that Walsall Connected service is familiar with the support available and where to direct the community to access the support.
- Working with regional and local military organisations to continue to raise awareness of the work of the covenant.
- Engaging with and supporting where appropriate, the armed forces charities locally through the Resilient Communities approach.
- Publicising these commitments through our literature and on our website as appropriate.

Commercial:

- Offering a discount to members of the Armed Forces and their families (as dependents) at the Council's leisure centres.
- Continuing to disregard War Disablement and War Widows pensions within the Council's localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Health:

- Recognising that whilst the provision of healthcare for service personnel is split between the MOD and the NHS each having its own statutory duties and covenant commitments, the Council has an important role to play in ensuring that the unique health needs of service personnel and their families are reflected in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Mental Health strategies and other related council policies and strategies and that this will be a consideration when those strategies are refreshed.
- Signposting those who need health and wellbeing related support to existing council services that provide prevention and rehabilitation programmes such as leisure centres and parks and countryside programmes, via the Council's Armed Forces webpage and other known networks.

Housing:

- Providing give advice and guidance from the Council's Housing and Welfare Team and local registered providers on available housing options and next steps. The advice being tailored to individual circumstances and in certain cases, having a statutory duty to assist.

Education:

- Ensuring that schools are aware of the provision in the School Admissions Code (England) regarding the allocation of school places to service children.
- Promoting resources such as the Service Children Progression Alliance' Thriving Lives Toolkit to schools [SCiP Alliance](#) which amongst other guidance, promotes tailored pastoral provision to support service children's mental health and wellbeing
- Encouraging schools to develop a clear strategy for the effective use of any dedicated funding (or example the service pupil premium in England in support of service pupils)

Civic responsibilities:

- Ensuring that the Borough's war memorials are maintained.
- Organising, facilitating, promoting and/or taking part in Armed Forces Day, Remembrance and other such ceremonial activities.

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Cabinet – 18 October 2023

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Portfolio:	Councillor A. Andrew - Deputy Leader and Regeneration
Related portfolios:	Councillor M. Bird - Leader of the Council Councillor G. Flint - Wellbeing, Leisure and Public Spaces
Service:	Planning and Building Control
Wards:	all
Key decision:	Yes
Forward plan:	Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1. Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is a national approach to development that aims to leave the natural environment in a better state than it was beforehand by delivering measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitat. BNG sits separately to all other existing legal protections for protected habitat, sites and species.

2. Summary

- 2.1. In January 2024, the Environment Act 2021, through upcoming secondary legislation, is expected to bring into effect the requirement for most new major developments to provide a minimum of 10% BNG, strengthening the current requirements stated within national planning policy. This will extend to small sites of less than 1 hectare in April 2024. There will also be a requirement to secure the management and monitoring of land on which BNG has been delivered for 30 years using legal agreements and planning obligations.
- 2.2. The council is still awaiting details on guidance and the secondary legislation to enact the statutory requirement from DEFRA and Natural England. This is likely to be released at the end of November 2023. Members will be updated at the meeting as necessary. A BNG guidance document has been created and is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.3. As the formal West Midlands Local Nature Recovery Strategy is expected to be completed in 2025. The Black Country Local Nature Recovery Map and Strategy has been produced as an interim guidance document (See **Appendix 2**) to aid in the delivery of BNG, through the planning decision making and plan making processes.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That the legal requirement to deliver biodiversity net gain from January 2024 and the planning processes required for its effective implementation, is noted.
- 3.2. That Council be recommended to adopt and publish biodiversity net gain guidance for Walsall, as set out in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.3. That Council be recommended to adopt and publish the Black Country Local Nature Recovery Map and Strategy, as set out in **Appendix 2**, to be used as guidance and evidence in the planning process.

4. Report detail – know

- 4.1. Over the last century, the state of nature in UK has declined dramatically as habitats have become increasingly degraded and fragmented. Robust evidence has identified that the UK has lost nearly half of its biodiversity and that 56% of our species are in decline, with 15% threatened with extinction.
- 4.2. The Environment Act 2021 seeks to enable nature to recover by committing to halt species decline by 2030 and increase species abundance by the end of 2042. This will be achieved by mandating development to achieve at least 10% BNG alongside other duties.
- 4.3. In addition, national planning policy, in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023), requires plans to promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity. As well as realising opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments which should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.
- 4.4. Through secondary legislation, enacted by the Environment Act, from January 2024, with an exact date yet to be confirmed, most new developments will be required to provide a minimum of 10% BNG. There will be a few exemptions which will include development sites with no existing habitat areas, householder applications, permitted development and small-scale self-build housing development.
- 4.5. To allow a staged commencement of the requirement, proposed developments which meet the threshold to be classified as ‘small sites’ have an extension until April 2024 before being subject to this statutory requirement. Small sites can be defined as either those proposed for residential development, including application sites of less than 1 hectare in size and consisting of less than 10 units, or those proposed for non-residential development with a floor space of less than 1,000 square metres.
- 4.6. BNG will be secured by way of a new statutorily worded planning condition attached to a planning approval, that cannot be removed, modified or

disapplied: development may not be begun unless (a) a biodiversity gain plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

- 4.7. It is expected that at the planning application determination stage, the applicants will be required to submit a biodiversity gain statement to provide details of the proposed net gain approach, with final details agreed and confirmed in a biodiversity gain plan, for compliance with this condition.
- 4.8. The statutory 10% BNG will be calculated by assessing the current habitats and landscaping present within an application site and assigning a proxy value to each habitat based on their size, condition, quality and strategic significance, using a metric spreadsheet designed by DEFRA. This is then repeated for the development proposal in consideration with proposed habitat retention, creation and enhancement. Both total proxy values are then compared against each other to determine whether a 10% biodiversity net increase has been delivered.
- 4.9. To deliver biodiversity net gain, developers have the following options:
 - a) The preferred option is for developers to achieve the 10% net gain within the development site, and they will be encouraged to accommodate this net gain into the early design stages of their schemes, especially as part of the pre-application process.
 - b) Where it is evidenced as being not possible to achieve the 10% net gain within a development site, developers can look to deliver provision offsite to meet this target, through legal agreements called conservation covenants or planning obligations.
 - c) The final, last resort, option for developers is to purchase statutory biodiversity credits through a national government scheme. These will be expensive and could be spent anywhere nationally and consequently with potentially no local benefits accruing.
- 4.10. All land placed under an agreement to be managed to meet BNG targets will be subject to a 30-year management period, formalised through a habitat management and monitoring plan. This plan will sit alongside any legal agreement and will require regular monitoring by the council or an alternative 'responsible body'. The council will include a relevant BNG monitoring fee within future planning obligations to secure this ongoing monitoring requirement.
- 4.11. One of the major commitments in the government's 25-year Environment Plan and the follow up Environment Improvement Plan 2023, is the delivery of the national Nature Recovery Network (NRN). The delivery of the NRN will provide 500,000 hectares of additional wildlife habitat, and link existing protected sites and landscapes, while providing wider environmental benefits including greater public appreciation and enjoyment, carbon capture, and water quality improvement and flood risk management. The NRN will be created by 48 interlinked Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), forming part of the Environment Act 2021, with the extent of the LNRS areas determined by the Secretary of State.

- 4.12. In June 2023, the secretary of state determined that Walsall Borough would be part of the West Midlands Local Nature Recovery Strategy, with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), formerly appointed by DEFRA, as the Responsible Authority for producing the strategy. Walsall are listed as a Supporting Authority by DEFRA to assist in its production. From a recent meeting with WMCA, it was stated that the WMCA are in the early stages of planning for the LNRS delivery and in line with government expectations, it is anticipated that the West Midlands LNRS will be completed in 2025.
- 4.13. However, with mandatory BNG coming into effect from November 2023, the Black Country Authorities commissioned the Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country (WTBBC) and EcoRecord to develop the Black Country LNRM+S for use in the interim period until the West Midlands LNRS can be adopted.
- 4.14. The Black Country Local Nature Recovery Map and Strategy (LNRM+S) has been produced and can be found at [Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(LNRS\) | Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust \(bbcwildlife.org.uk\)](#). It is a locally led spatial strategy designed to align with, and help deliver, the requirements of the Environment Act, including the delivery of mandatory biodiversity net gain, and provide a focus for a strengthened duty on all public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- 4.15. The map and strategy were produced by:
- mapping the most valuable existing habitat for nature by comparing existing mapping data and satellite habitat derived data against land use, species records, protected sites and priority habitat, in order to evaluate the ecological importance of landscape units across the whole of the Black Country.
 - mapping specific proposals for creating and/or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.
 - setting out a framework for agreed priorities for nature's recovery by the identification of core landscapes and priority network restoration zones.
- 4.16. Five core landscape areas are identified within Walsall Borough that support the highest abundance and diversity of semi-natural and priority habitat. They are considered a priority for investment in ecological recovery. These five areas are:
1. Rough Wood Chase and Sneyd Reservoir
 2. Brownhills Common and Pelsall
 3. Barr Beacon, Druid's Heath and Shire Oak
 4. Park Lime Pits, Cuckoo's Nook, The Dingle and Great Barr Park
 5. the northern portion of Sandwell Valley

- 4.17. In addition, priority network restoration zones are identified within the strategy. These are areas where support should be given to the creation of ecological corridors across the wider landscape to improve connectivity and where investment in nature recovery outside of the core areas should be prioritised.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.18. The implementation of BNG through the development management process, will help deliver the following Council Plan 2022/2025 priorities:
- a. encouraging our residents to lead more active, fulfilling and independent lives to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing
 - b. the people of Walsall feeling safe in a cleaner, greener Borough
 - c. regenerating the Borough to support places where people are proud to live and work

Risk management

- 4.19. Unless satisfactory measures are put in place to secure, deliver, manage and monitor biodiversity net gain effectively, the council could be challenged as to not exercising its legal duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity in an appropriate manner.
- 4.20. The provision of the additional mandatory 10% BNG requirement could be argued to have implications on the viability of development schemes. This may mean that developers will seek to evidence that, by taking on the BNG requirement as part of the scheme, they would have to forego the provision of other planning measures, such as an appropriate number of affordable homes. Should this matter arise, the overall viability of the scheme will need to be assessed and the planning balance, within the planning decision making process, applied with the mandatory requirement of net gain in mind.

Financial implications

- 4.21. In May 2022, the council employed an ecology officer to lead on this matter within the planning and building control service which was funded from existing revenue resources.
- 4.22. The government has provided grant funding to assist with the council in being ready for the statutory requirement, with £10,047 in 2021/22 and £26,807 being made available for both financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24. The government has not yet committed to long term funding for the additional duties imposed by the act however the ongoing ask is around staffing and monitoring arrangements which can be achieved within existing resources.
- 4.23. Additional monitoring fees can be incorporated within the legal agreements and planning obligations however secondary legislation is required for further guidance on this matter.

Legal implications

- 4.24. The Environment Act 2021 includes a provision for BNG to be a condition of planning permission in England and provides a legal framework for a biodiversity gain site register, biodiversity credits and local nature recovery strategies in England, as well as a general duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- 4.25. The new statutory requirement will place increased duties on the council as part of the planning system. These will include:
- discharging the statutory BNG planning condition;
 - monitoring and enforcing legal obligations placed on landowners providing registered offsite biodiversity gain and significant onsite biodiversity gain;
 - review monitoring reports submitted by the developer over the 30-year management period; and
 - regularly publishing a biodiversity report summarising the actions that the council has taken over the past reporting period and plans for action over the subsequent period.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.26. Evidence has already been produced by external bodies to produce an interim LNRM+S to deliver on BNG on identify and location strategic ecological sites.
- 4.27. Ongoing review of legal aspects and relevant aspects of the planning process will require assessment internally, but could require the potential procurement of evidence externally, in order to meet the requirements in an efficient and legal compliant manner.
- 4.28. Further evidence on this matter may be procured as part of the progression of the Walsall Borough Local Plan, with an emphasis on setting out a potential policy on net gain. While such a policy would need to align with the net gain provisions, it will sit separately to the mandatory BNG requirement, and could for instance, be targeted to meet local circumstances.

Property implications

- 4.29. The minimum 10% statutory requirement will place new obligations and legal requirements on development, which will require additional actions throughout the process, from early design stages to 30 years post completion. This will include council projects and council land, unless any exemptions apply.
- 4.30. Should the council choose to offer its land to be a sink for off-site compensation, this would allow developments to fund habitat enhancement and management within our land. An internal working group is currently looking at legal requirements and ramifications of taking this direction.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.31. The net gain approach plans to leave the environment in a better condition for the next generation by protecting, enhancing and creating habitat areas for wildlife, while also creating more green areas for residents and increasing green infrastructure and travel routes.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.32. With the use of the strategic significance weighting of the biodiversity scoring, the LNRMS and future potential development plan policies, green space creation can be directed to areas within the borough, which currently have a lack of open space areas or along wildlife corridors. This could result in improving health and wellbeing in areas of relative deprivation, thereby tackling the inequality of access to green space within the borough, while improving landscape corridors.

Staffing implications

- 4.33. This new statutory requirement will place an additional workload on planning officers, enforcement officers and the ecology officer, with support from service areas such as Healthy Spaces and legal services. This will include the task of assessing biodiversity gain plans, implementing the 30-year monitoring requirement for application and reporting on this duty.

Climate Impact

- 4.34. The mandatory 10% net gain requirement for development in both the urban and rural areas of the borough can be seen to form part of a package of proposals on habitat creation and enhancement to help tackle the climate emergency through other ecosystem services and link directly to the council's future climate change strategy.

Consultation

- 4.35. No formal public consultation is required as this matter relates to the implementation of a legal requirement and has been overseen by an internal BNG working group.

5. Decide

- 5.1. For the Council to adopt guidance, provided in **Appendix 1**, on how BNG will be implemented in order to comply with the legal requirement expected to be implemented in January and April 2024, respectively.
- 5.2. As this looks to implement guidance to meet new national legislation, no other alternatives are available.
- 5.3. For the Council to adopt the LNRMS as guidance and evidence to be used in the planning process.

- 5.4. The alternative option would be to not utilise the documentation and await the formal West Midlands LNRS to be produced in 2025. While Walsall Council would still see the benefits of the creation of green spaces through offsite compensation areas, the lack of a landscape led strategy would prevent the habitat creation being directed to areas to provide additional wider ecosystems benefits and borough wide ecological corridors.
- 5.5. In addition, without the evidence base for plan making, further evidence may be required to be produced for the Local Plan or a delay created to awaiting the West Midlands LNRS.

6. Respond

- 6.1. The proposed response is to adopt and implement the biodiversity net gain guidance, as set out in **Appendix 1**, and the LNRM+S, as set out in **Appendix 2**.

7. Review

- 7.1. Development plan policies on the theme of nature conservation and biodiversity net gain in particular, along with any new internal BNG processes and monitoring regimes, will be kept under regular review to ensure they achieve the necessary outcomes.
- 7.2. The electronic mapping systems and additional services required to deliver BNG effectively will be reviewed, including the measures needed to deliver, manage and monitor net gain on council owned land as off-site compensation areas.
- 7.3. The Black Country Local Nature Recovery Map and Strategy will be retained as a live document, to be reviewed and kept up to date on a regular basis with current and future biodiversity work and projects.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Biodiversity net gain guidance document

Appendix 2: Black Country Local Nature Recovery map and strategy: an emerging approach – March 2022

Background papers

- Planning advisory service website
<https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/topics/environment/biodiversity-net-gain-local-authorities>
- The government biodiversity net gain website –
[https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-net-gain#:~:text=Biodiversity%20net%20gain%20\(%20BNG%20\)%20is,than%20it%20was%20before%20development](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-net-gain#:~:text=Biodiversity%20net%20gain%20(%20BNG%20)%20is,than%20it%20was%20before%20development)

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Interim Director
On behalf of Dave Brown

6 October 2023

Signed



Councillor Andrew
Portfolio holder

6 October 2023

Walsall Council

Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance Note

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a national approach to development, planning and land management that aims to leave the natural environment in a better state than it was beforehand, by delivering measurable improvements for biodiversity, by creating or enhancing habitat.

Why is BNG necessary?

Over the last century, the state of nature in our country has declined dramatically as the pressure of our demands has made our habitat increasingly degraded and fragmented. With a report completed by the Natural History Museum, in collaboration with the RSPB, stating that the UK has lost nearly half of its biodiversity ([UK has 'led the world' in destroying the natural environment | Natural History Museum \(nhm.ac.uk\)](#)), while the 2019 State of Nature report revealed that 56% of our species are in decline and 15% threatened with extinction ([State-of-Nature-2019-UK-full-report.pdf \(nbn.org.uk\)](#)).

Biodiversity Net Gain alongside other duties within the Environment Act 2021, will enable nature to recover by committing to halt species decline by 2030 and increase species abundance by the end of 2042.

At a local level, Walsall are committed to protecting and conserving the natural environment and see the statutory requirement as a pursuant to that aim.

You can find more information on the BNG on [Understanding biodiversity net gain - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) website.

National Policy

Amendments made to the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) in 2022 included revisions to para 174 and 180 to stipulate that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. As this is currently in affect between now and November 2023, Walsall are requesting that planning proposals demonstrate at least a net gain in biodiversity.

The Environment Act (2021) contains a statutory BNG condition for planning permission that will enforce the delivery of mandatory 10% BNG with development. This is set to come into effect for most major applications in November 2023, while small sites will be brought in from April 2024. This will directly affect any application submitted after these dates. The exact date for both commencements has yet to be confirmed.

The Government will be providing secondary legislation, guidance, and tools to support its implementation of this policy.

BNG and your application

After November or April, respectively, any development covered by the Town and Country Planning Act, will be required to demonstrate, and deliver a measurable minimum 10% uplift for biodiversity, which cannot be avoided.

This uplift needs to be secured via a legally binding agreement with the applicant demonstrating how the biodiversity uplift is managed and monitored over the 30-year period.

This new requirement will not alter existing protections for the natural environment including protections for sites, priority habitats and species. These will still be required by all developments and should be achieved alongside this new requirement.

A major application is any application that involves:

- Mineral extraction
- Waste development
- Residential development of between 10 or dwellings
- Residential development on a site area of 0.5ha or more and the number of dwellings is unknown.
- Development of floorspace of 1,000 square metres or more
- Development on sites over 1 ha or more
- Change of use over 1,000 square metres or more

A small site is defined as:

- Residential development of fewer than 10 residential units with an area less than 1 hectare
- Residential development of an unknown number of residential units with an area less than 0.5 hectare
- Non-residential development of less than 1 hectare
- Non-residential development with a floor space of less than 1,000 square metres.

There are number of exemptions to the requirement for mandatory BNG. These including:

- Permitted development;
- Urgent crown development;
- Temporary impacts that can be restored within 2 years;
- Existing sealed surfaces (such as tarmac or existing buildings) a zero score;
- Development impacting habitat of an area below a 'de minimis' threshold of 25 metre squared, or 5m for linear habitats such as hedgerows;
- Householder applications;
- Biodiversity gain sites (where habitats are being enhanced for wildlife); and
- Small scale self-build and custom housebuilding.

Developments exempt from BNG are still covered by local natural environment policies, as such we would seek for biodiversity to be considered within the proposals to deliver habitat and species enhancements. This could include protected species features such as bird and bat boxes or hedgehog highways or the integration of native species within landscape proposals.

How it will be implemented?

The statutory requirement will be implemented through a planning condition. Therefore, once an application is approved a statutory condition will be automatically attached to the approval, requiring the submission of a Biodiversity Gain Plan. This will describe how the 10% BNG will be achieved and secured and must include the following information:

1. Information about the steps taken or to be taken to minimise the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the onsite habitat and any other habitat.
2. The pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat.
3. The post-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat.
4. Any registered offsite biodiversity gain allocated to the development and the biodiversity value of that gain in relation to the development.
5. Any biodiversity credits purchased for the development.
6. Such other matters as the Secretary of State may by regulations specify.

To achieve mandatory BNG, should the development undertake 'significant' onsite habitat creation or enhancement and or utilise offsite land, there will be an additional pre-commencement condition to produce a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP). This will detail the 30 years management prescription proposed, how it will be secured, and the monitoring requirement agreed upon by the Local Planning Authority / Responsible Body. The monitoring requirement and schedule will include the submission of monitoring report to the LPA / Responsible body at intervals, likely 1, 3, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 30 years.

Both reports and BNG will be secured under legal agreements or planning obligations.

Walsall will monitor commitments within the documentation, any conditions attached from assessment stage and the purchase of any credits.

Please note that while the statutory requirement will be met at discharge of condition stage, development will still need to provide sufficient supporting documentation within the application to provide evidence on how the statutory measures will be met on site and or offsite at determination stage. While not confirmed by national guidance at this stage, it is highly likely that a Biodiversity Gain Statement with a completed up to date DEFRA metric will be required at validation stage to provide this evidence.

How will BNG be measured?

Measurable BNG is calculated using a biodiversity metric spreadsheet, devised by DEFRA, which assigns a proxy value to habitats called 'biodiversity units'.

This allows a calculation to be made of the existing habitat present within an application and the habitats proposed as part of the development or management. The comparison of these scores can then be used to determine whether there is a 10% uplift in biodiversity from the existing site value. When utilised as part of the design process of a development it can be used to help design, place make and determine land management decisions to support biodiversity and other wide ecosystem benefits.

The proxy value for each habitat is determined based on four factors:

- Condition,
- Distinctiveness
- Size,
- Strategic significance

Walsall will be releasing guidance on the strategic significance shortly. This will be initially based on the interim Black Country Local Nature Recovery Map and Strategy from November 2023. However, this will be altered to align with the future Walsall Local Plan and the formal West Midlands Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Download the latest version of the DEFRA biodiversity metric, for both a major applications and small sites, and guidance document here: [LINK](#)

The BNG reports and assessment requirements should only be undertaken by a Suitably Qualified Ecologist and utilised the current up to date Metric spreadsheet. Walsall recommends that BNG calculation are brought in a site selection stage of any development through to post development.

How to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain

Any application should look to achieve BNG onsite and this should be a key consideration at the early stages of a development and the design process. As per the mitigation hierarchy that is embedded in the national planning policy, where the impact on biodiversity must first be:

- Avoided, then
- Minimised, then
- Compensated for on-site

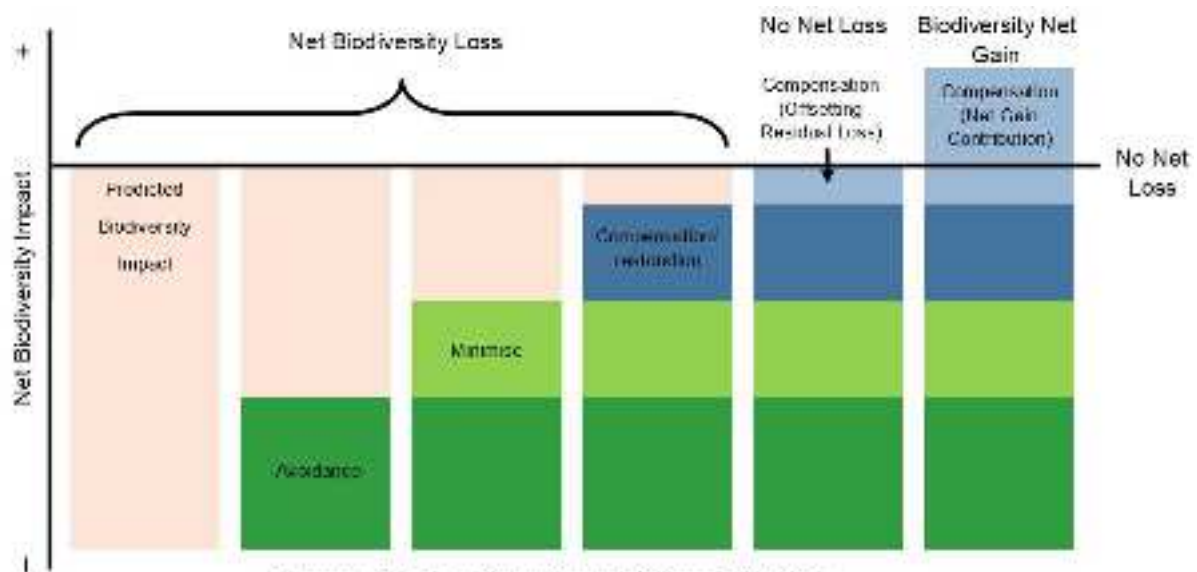


Figure 1. Mitigation hierarchy and Biodiversity Net Gain

In the event, that a completed biodiversity metric indicates that the development will not achieve 10% uplift, consideration of the following options should be undertaken:

- a) Review the proposed site layout and landscape proposals to assess whether further biodiversity improvement could be undertaken to achieve 10% uplift;
- b) Look to secure offsite land to undertake habitat enhancement or creation works to meet the 10% requirement.
 - i. This area can be owned by the same developer / landowner or a third party however, it would need to be secured and a planning obligation or conservation covenant.
 - ii. These offsite areas should be in close proximity to the application site, with local weighting towards sites with high strategic significance / within the core landscape and priority network restoration zones as identified within the Black Country Local Nature Recovery map and Strategy.
- c) Purchase statutory biodiversity credits through a national government scheme. Any applicant looking to go down this route should get in contact with LPA to discuss. This will be hosted by Natural England and further information available: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/statutory-biodiversity-credit-prices>.

Please note that very high distinctiveness habitat are habitats, such as Ancient woodland, which are classified as high threatened and internationally scarce. Any loss of these habitat from development should be avoided. However, development could choose to enhance this areas.

Bespoke compensation would be required for any loss and would need to be agreed on a case by case basis with the planning authority.

Offsite compensation in Walsall

Within Walsall, applicants will have the option to offset their biodiversity losses within their application utilising their own land or through a third party, should the management be legally secured for a minimum of 30 years.

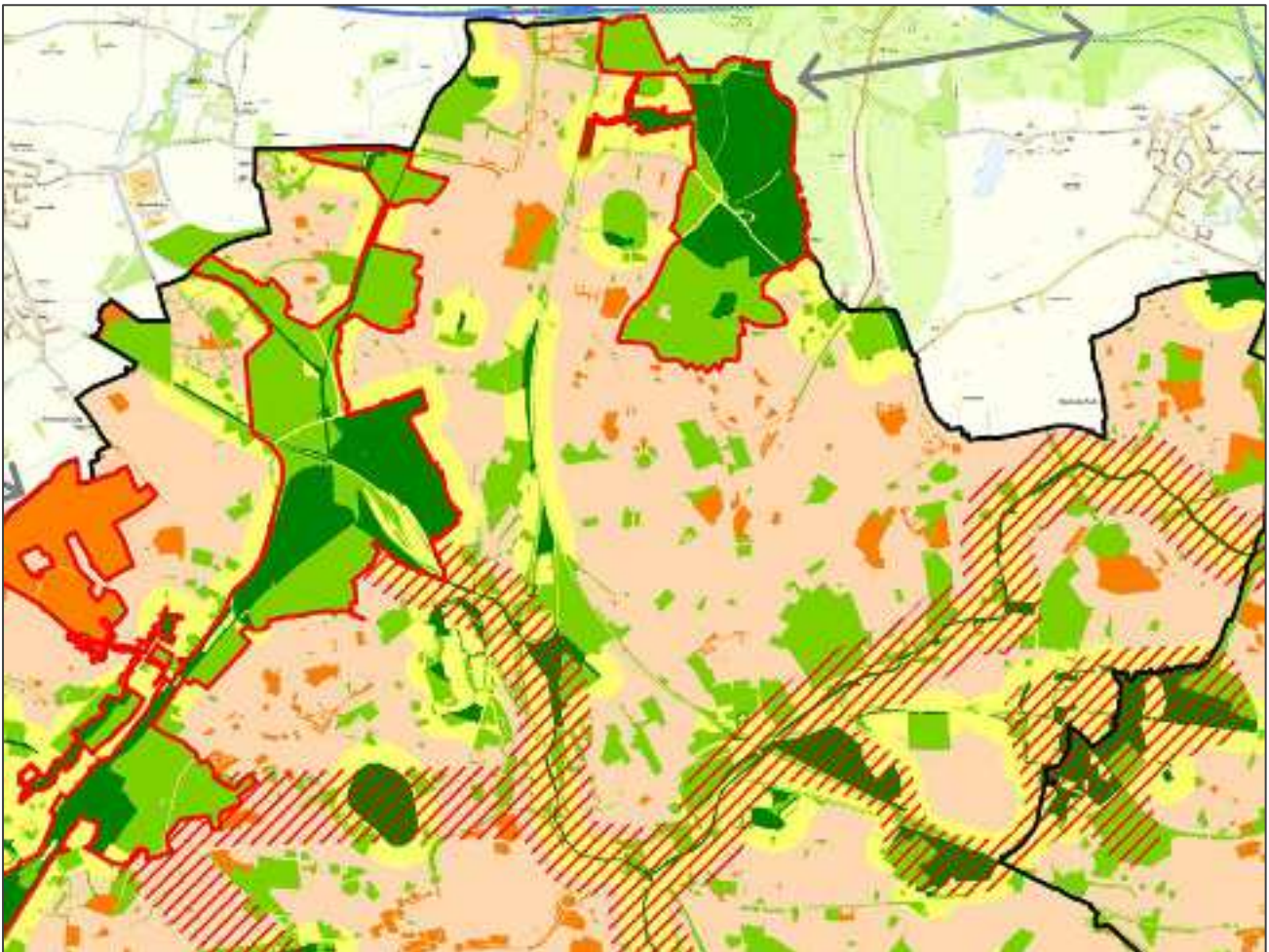
We are unable to recommend third part offset providers and at this stage as a local list of such providers is not available. All applicants, however, may wish to approach BNG brokers, habitat banks, local landowners or nature conservation trust to help you achieve your BNG requirements.

We're currently looking to the potential to utilise Council owned land towards offsetting. The option will be informed by government advice. Further information on this option will be provided on the planning page when available.

You can contact us if you are a provider of biodiversity offsets or would like more information on the options available.

Black Country

Local Nature Recovery map and strategy: an emerging approach



March 2022

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1. Introduction

1. The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country and EcoRecord (the Local Environmental Record Centre for Birmingham and the Black Country) have been commissioned by the four Black Country local authorities (Dudley MBC, Sandwell MBC, Walsall MBC and Wolverhampton City Council, supported by the Black Country Consortium) to undertake an analysis of evidence to produce a draft Local Nature Recovery map and develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) approach for the Black Country.
2. The commission comprised of three broad tasks:
 - Task 1:** Development of a habitat baseline for the Black Country
 - Task 2:** Produce a draft Nature Recovery Map for the Black Country
 - Task 3a:** Produce a draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map
 - Task 3b:** Develop draft Priority Biodiversity Actions (Statement of Biodiversity Priorities)
3. In this report are presented the methodology developed to date, as well as a series of map images and tabulated outputs that represent the approach and direction taken. It is proposed, however, that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy should not comprise a static document, rather this should be a 'live' digital (map-based) freely accessible resource that can be utilised to guide action and investment in nature's recovery.
4. A maintained online portal will provide local planning authorities, the West Midlands Combined Authority, developers, government agencies, health providers, farmers, community groups and others with the information they need to help them understand how transport, housing, employment, open space, agricultural and green investment decisions can be maximised to deliver a range of biodiversity and socio-environmental benefits.
5. Examples of how the portal will aid the planning of investment in nature's recovery and deliver ecosystem services benefits include:
 - Targeted investment in habitat creation and enhancement, helping to create a coherent ecological network across the whole of the Black Country landscape.
 - Planning tree planting where it will best mitigate the impacts of climate change, flooding and poor air quality.
 - Identifying deficits and investment opportunities in accessible natural green space to support the delivery of improvements to the health and wellbeing of those communities most in need.
 - Providing guidance on urban green infrastructure needs and supporting investment in the regeneration of built-up areas.
6. It is proposed that data should be regularly updated and mapped to reflect changes to the habitats and species populations of the Black Country, enabling monitoring and reporting on both positive and negative change.
7. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy could additionally support the Black Country in achieving the best outcomes from the mandatory requirement for 10% biodiversity gain from development schemes. The Environment Act (2021) makes provision for a register of biodiversity gain sites, and for the purchasing of biodiversity credits for the purpose of meeting the biodiversity gain objective. It is proposed that the map portal could be utilised as both the repository/database of the registry, and to target the investment of biodiversity credits to maximise delivery of LNRS objectives and biodiversity priorities.

1.1 The Nature Recovery Network

8. The development of a Nature Recovery Network (NRN) covering the whole of England is a major commitment in the [Government's 25 Year Environment Plan](#) (2018). The plan states that the development of the NRN will provide 500,000 hectares of additional wildlife habitat, more effectively linking existing protected sites and landscapes, as well as urban green and blue infrastructure; and that as well as helping wildlife thrive, the NRN could be designed to bring a wide range of additional benefits: greater public enjoyment; pollination; carbon capture; water quality improvements and flood management.
9. The Nature Recovery Network will help restore many ecosystem functions and improve the services upon which society depends; benefitting nature, people and the economy. Such a network will deliver on the recommendations from Professor Sir John Lawton in Making Space for Nature (Lawton et al. 2010) that recovering wildlife will require more habitat; in better condition; in bigger patches that are more closely connected.
10. Making Space for Nature recommended the development of a 'coherent ecological network in England to help counter habitat loss and fragmentation, and declining habitat quality as a result of a range of pressures including land use change, the intensification of agricultural management, disturbance, pollution, nutrient enrichment and climate change'.
11. The government have stated that establishing the NRN will help deal with three of the biggest challenges society faces: biodiversity loss, climate change and wellbeing (Defra, 2020), and will:
 - Enhance sites designated for nature conservation and other wildlife-rich places - newly created and restored wildlife-rich habitats, corridors and stepping stones will help wildlife populations to grow and move.
 - Improve the landscape's resilience to climate change, providing natural solutions to reduce carbon and manage flood risk, and sustaining vital ecosystems such as improved soil, clean water and clean air.
 - Reinforce the natural and cultural diversity of our landscapes, and protect our historic natural environment.
 - Enable us to enjoy and connect with nature where we live, work and play - benefiting our health and wellbeing.

1.2 Local Nature Recovery Strategies

12. The [Environment Act 2021](#) made Local Nature Recovery Strategies mandatory in England. Together the strategies are to cover the whole of the country, and the Secretary of State is to determine the areas within England to which individual Local Nature Recovery Strategies are to relate.
13. A Local Nature Recovery Strategy is to be prepared and published by the responsible authority as appointed by the Secretary of State, and is such one of the following:
 - A local authority whose area is, or is within, the strategy area
 - The Mayor of London
 - The mayor for the area of a combined authority established under section 103 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009
 - A National Park authority in England
 - The Broads Authority
 - Natural England.

14. The Act states that a LNRS relating to an area (“the strategy area”) is to include:

A statement of biodiversity priorities for the strategy area, and a local habitat map for the whole strategy area (or two or more local habitat maps which together cover the whole strategy area).

The statement of biodiversity priorities is to include:

- A description of the strategy area and its biodiversity
- A description of the opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity, in terms of habitats and species, in the strategy area
- The priorities, in terms of habitats and species, for recovering or enhancing biodiversity (taking into account the contribution that recovering or enhancing biodiversity can also make to other environmental benefits)
- Proposals as to potential measures relating to those priorities.

A local habitat map is a map identifying:

- National conservation sites in the strategy area
- Any nature reserves in the strategy area provided under section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949
- Other areas in the strategy area which in the opinion of the responsible authority:
 - are, or could become, of particular importance for biodiversity, or
 - are areas where the recovery or enhancement of biodiversity could make a particular contribution to other environmental benefits.

1.3 Nature Recovery Network vs. Ecological Networks

15. Whilst an ecological network can be understood as a number of core, well connected, high quality areas of well-functioning ecosystems, together with those parts of the intervening landscape that are ‘wildlife-friendly’ and which, collectively, allow wildlife to thrive; the Nature Recovery Network should also enhance natural beauty, heritage and conserve geodiversity, and opportunities should be taken to deliver benefits for people, such as flood alleviation, recreational opportunities and provide nature-based solutions to climate change adaptation and mitigation.
16. These joint aims, for nature and people, are at the heart of the Nature Recovery Network and are inter-dependent: networks for wildlife that also deliver benefits for and are valued by people. Thus they are likely to receive greater investment and protection by society, and consequently provide more for nature and be more sustainable in the long-term.

1.4 The principles for planning a Nature Recovery Network

17. A number of underlying principles that are key to the successful creation of a Nature Recovery Network have been identified and are described below (taken from Crick, H. et al, 2020):

1. Understand the place: Recognise where the nature network will sit, in terms of how the natural characteristics of the area generate conditions for different habitats and how the cultural landscape character has evolved and is valued. Identify what the area is special for, from a national and local perspective, how nature has changed and the potential for its restoration. This assessment should include biodiversity and ecosystem function, geodiversity, landscape and the historical environment. Understand where people live and work and how ecosystems provide benefits to them. This enables us to identify priorities and opportunities, and to be sympathetic to the current character of the landscape, while not being constrained from accommodating what the future might hold.

2. Create a vision: for your nature network and be clear about your objectives: specify what the ultimate goals are for the network, identify the spatial scale, and the environmental and societal aspects that are important.

3. Involve people: People both benefit from and create nature networks: plans should engage and be created with the community; recognising that the landscapes and the ecosystems that support species also provide multiple benefits to people.

4. Create core sites: Core sites are the heart of nature networks; these are places that sustain thriving wildlife populations that may expand across the network. It will often be best to build core areas of nature networks by enlarging, connecting and improving existing high quality wildlife sites, to make well-functioning ecosystems. However, on occasion, it will be appropriate to fill gaps in a network by creating core sites where little wildlife currently remains. Within landscapes, working with functional ecological units will provide the building blocks to support abundant and diverse wildlife and ecosystem services.

5. Build resilience: Enhance the resilience of landscapes, ecosystems and their ecosystem services through restoration that reinstates natural processes, accommodates desirable change, improves low quality habitat and includes areas that provide buffering from the causes of current and potential future environmental degradation. Take opportunities to deliver nature-based solutions to climate change and reduce external pressures (such as diffuse pollution).

6. Embrace dynamism: Remember that in a natural state, ecosystems and landscapes change and are inherently dynamic over short and long time scales; allow natural processes to operate whenever possible, as they will aid restoration of ecosystem function and enhance the sustainability of conservation efforts.

7. Encourage diversity: Nature networks need to include a diverse physical structure, influenced by the underlying geodiversity, to accommodate the widest variety of opportunities (niches) for species. Biological complexity and landscape diversity are important to facilitate resilience. Such diversity is best founded on the restoration of natural environmental processes where this is possible, overlain by vegetation management regimes that encourage further diversity.

8. Think 'networks': Networks need to be planned at multiple spatial scales and address multiple issues. Joined-up actions across adjacent landscapes help to deliver integrated outcomes and ensure that the network acts as a coherent whole for all species (especially for those that live in the wider countryside), ecosystems and people within the area.

9. Start now but plan long-term: Identify the locations that can deliver a coherent nature network, but prioritise those locations that provide the best opportunities for action now, while developing longer term solutions.

10. Monitor progress: evaluate actions and adapt management in the light of results, to achieve long-term aims at local and national scales.

2. Task 1: Creating a habitat baseline for the Black Country

18. Understanding the distribution and condition of habitats is key to understanding the current state of the natural environment and the status of the services that the environment is able to provide to society.
19. The available evidence should be as current and comprehensive as possible, and this evidence forms the baseline against which future improvements/change will be measured.
20. Prior to this work, evidence on habitats in the Black Country was limited to a small proportion of its landscape, and current data on habitat extent and condition was only available for a small proportion of designated sites.
21. The most comprehensive habitat data set previously available for the Black Country was collated c. 30 years ago (West Midlands County Council & Urban Wildlife Trust, 1982-1988), and even then, a significant proportion of the more heavily built-up parts of the landscape were not included in the survey.
22. The use of satellite imagery in conjunction with existing habitat data generated from field survey has enabled us to achieve a comprehensive map of the vegetation cover present in the Black Country, thus ensuring a reasonable baseline to use as a means of measuring future change. These data are also key in assessing habitat connectivity.
23. In time the satellite derived habitat data set will be further processed, complemented by field survey data and updated, as we deliver on the commitment to the LNRS vision of making more space for nature in the conurbation.
24. The work undertaken as part of this commission builds on previous work carried out by EcoRecord and Spottitt in 2019 (Kennedy L. et al. (2020)). Following that work, a number of possible improvements were identified, which required improvements to the algorithm and original analysis. These have not only helped to increase the accuracy of some of the classes, but also enabled the identification of a heathland/scrub class which is of particular significance in parts of the Black Country that support ecologically valuable lowland heathland habitat. Post processing of these data is currently progressing as this is a large, complex data set and their processing and analysis is time consuming.
25. The UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) (Butcher, B. *et al.*, 2020) classes that the satellite-derived habitat data set has identified are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: UKHab classes identified by the satellite-derived habitat analysis

Level 2 Code	Level 2 label	Level 3 code	Level 3 label
g	Grassland		
w	Woodland and forest	w1	Broadleaved mixed and yew woodland
w	Woodland and forest	w2	Coniferous woodland
h	Heathland and shrub		
c	Cropland		
u	Urban		
s	Sparsely vegetated land		
r	Rivers and Lakes	r1	

The most recently produced satellite derived habitat data set is shown in Figure 1.

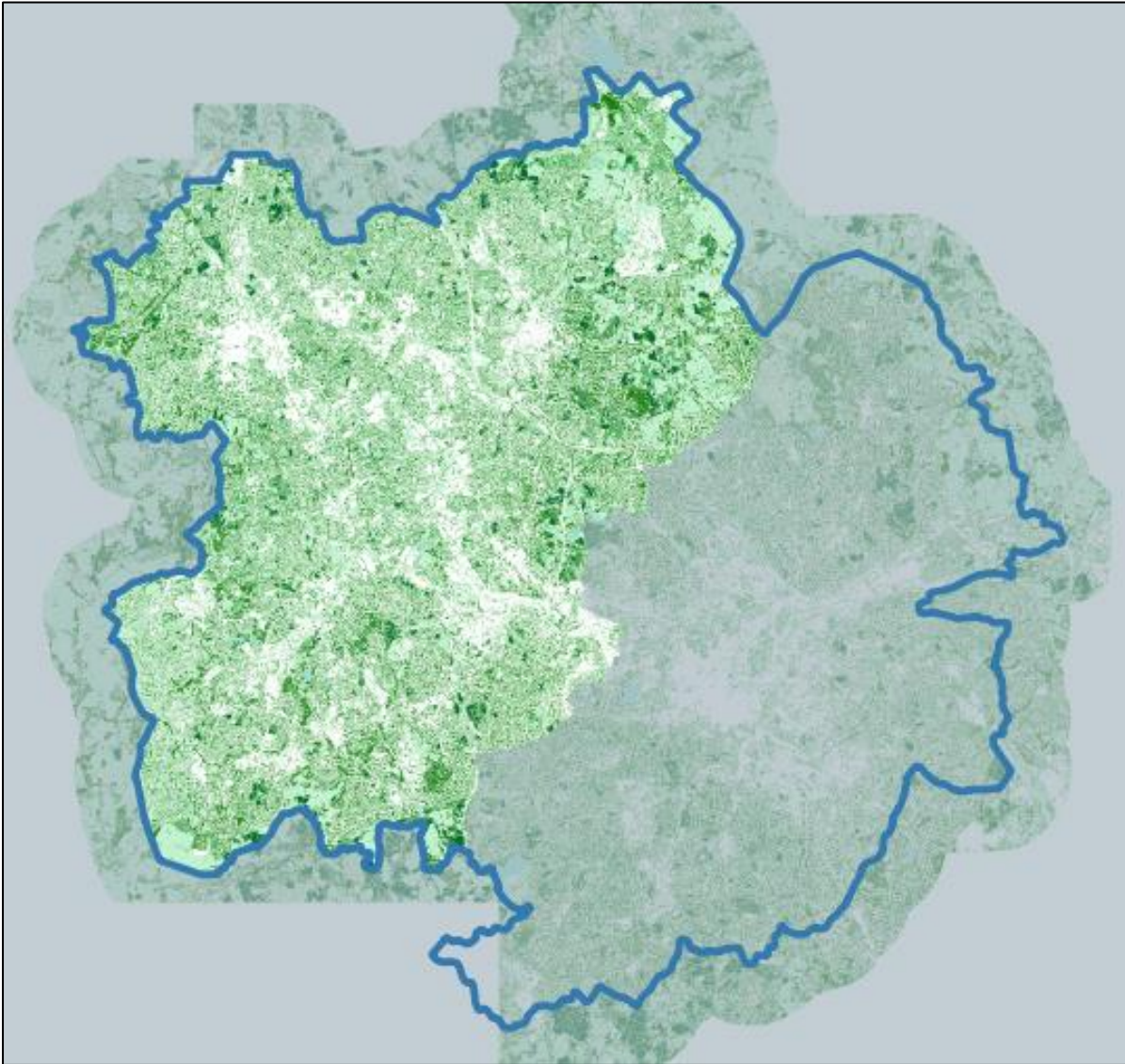


Figure 1. Map showing Satellite derived habitat classification results (habitat/vegetation classes shown in green/blue; built up areas in white).

3. Task 2: Produce a draft Nature Recovery Map for the Black Country

26. The task of producing a starting point for a Black Country-wide Nature Recovery Network map involved the following stages:
- 1.** An ecological evaluation of the Black Country landscape was produced, based on the methodology described in chapter 3.1.
 - 2.** An analysis of habitat connectivity was carried out using Condatis v1.1, a software designed to assist with the planning of habitat restoration (Wallis, D.; Hodgson, J. 2021) as described in chapter 3.2.
 - 3.** A review of available NRN guidance, national data sets and tools was carried out as summarised in chapter 3.3.
 - 4.** Using all the available evidence and guidance, a Nature Recovery Map for the Black Country was produced (approach described in chapter 3.4).

3.1 Black Country-wide ecological evaluation

27. In 2012 Birmingham and the Black Country was declared a Nature Improvement Area (NIA) by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra). The Birmingham and Black Country NIA Ecological Strategy (The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country & EcoRecord, 2017) identifies the conurbation's Core Ecological Areas, Ecological Linking Areas and Ecological Opportunity Areas. This approach was informed by that described in the Making Space for Nature report (Lawton, 2010). The NIA ecological strategy was developed through the use of ecological network mapping which utilised a combination of botanical data, mapped on a 1km x 1km grid (monad) scale, and statutory and locally-designated wildlife sites mapped on a 250m x 250m grid (quarter monad) scale.
28. The NIA ecological strategy has proven a useful and influential tool in targeting available resources for the restoration, enhancement and creation of semi-natural habitats. The development of the strategy meant that valuable ecological areas had begun to be identified at a landscape scale, but due to the resolution of the data used, it was difficult to relate this to individual landscape units.
29. The information that exists for the network of existing statutory (SAC, SSSI, LNR) and locally-designated wildlife sites (SINC, SLINC) enables an assessment of the ecological value of these individual sites to be made. However, that assessment was proven more difficult for the wider landscape. The methodology described below was developed to utilise the best available evidence to more comprehensively describe the relative ecological value of the wider landscape across the Black Country.

3.1.1 Ecological Evaluation Methodology

30. The methodology used for undertaking an ecological evaluation of the Black Country area is based on attributing a relative value to individual landscape units using a range of currently available data sets that are relevant, systematic and comprehensively collected for the whole of the study area. A total of seven data sets were used in the assessment and the rationale for using each individual data set is presented and discussed below. Each landscape unit was assigned a value ranging from 1 (Low Ecological Value) to 5 (Very High Ecological Value) using the different criterion as described below. A base score (from 1 – Low Ecological Value, to 5 – Very High Ecological Value) was devised for each land use as set out in 4.1, and this score was then modified based on a number of parameters and determined by the known influence that those have on increasing ecological value when present.
31. Table 8 (Evaluation Matrix) describes the evaluation process and the rule base used to determine the final value ascribed to each land use unit as follows: 1 – Low Ecological Value; 2 – Medium Low Ecological Value; 3 – Medium High Ecological Value; 4 – High Ecological Value and 5 – Very High Ecological Value.
32. The evaluation was undertaken using GIS software to run a series of queries following the rule base described in Table 8.
33. The final output of this assessment is a GIS layer containing a set of landscape units, each assigned an ecological value based on the application of the rule base developed, using the parameters/criterion as described below.
34. For ease of use, two separate GIS layers have been produced, one for areas of greenspace/undeveloped land and another GIS layer for the built environment.

3.1.1.1 Land Use

35. **Rationale:** *Land use will significantly affect the ecological value of a landscape unit.*
36. As a starting point for the analysis the study area was classified into a series of landscape units, each one relatively uniform in character.
37. The decision to use a land use classification was taken for the following reasons:
- The habitat data that are currently available for the study area are not comprehensive nor sufficiently up to date, especially for those areas outside designated nature conservation sites.
 - Land use has a significant impact on the likely ecological value of the habitats present.
 - Mapping areas by land use type tends to produce larger landscape units than mapping areas according to habitats. This makes it easier to analyse an area at a landscape scale, rather than at the scale of individual sites or habitat features.

Creating a Land Use Data set

38. The study area was mapped using a combination of Ordnance Survey MasterMap, aerial photography and existing/available open space layers.
39. Each land parcel of the study area was assigned to one of the land use categories shown in Table 2. The land use categories defined were those relevant to the study area. Should a different study area be chosen then additional land use categories will be considered and mapped.
40. The following rules were followed in mapping land parcels:
- Each mapped land parcel was assigned to a single land use category and merged with any adjoining land parcels of the same type to form larger landscape units.
 - Any associated buildings were included within the wider landscape unit.
 - Land parcels of the same type separated by a road were not merged.
 - Roads, active railway lines and roadside footpaths were not mapped.
 - There was no minimum mappable unit set, as some of the land parcels within certain land use categories may be naturally quite small, such as individual detached gardens surrounded by other land use types or a small canal section dissected by roads.
 - Ponds/Lakes were only classified separately if they were not clearly contained within another defined wider land use unit (e.g. Golf Course, School Ground etc.).
 - Woodland and Semi-natural Habitat Mosaic land parcels that appeared significantly distinct from the wider land use unit were mapped as a separate unit unless they would normally be expected to be a component feature within that wider land use type (e.g. Golf Course).
 - Land parcels in the following categories were classified in the 'Semi-natural Habitat Mosaic' category if they formed part of a wider landscape unit of that type:
 - Pond/Lake
 - Woodland
 - Meadow

Table 2: Land use categories

Land Use Category	Notes
FARMLAND	
Arable	Areas that appear from aerial photography to be under cultivation for crops. This includes fields cut for silage and those under an arable/pasture rotation.
Pasture	Areas that appear from aerial photography to be permanent pasture. Google Earth has aerial images dating back to 1999 which have been used to help determine this category. Areas under an arable/pasture rotation regime are included in the Arable category.
Meadow	Grassland under a hay meadow management regime. It is difficult to identify hay meadows from aerial photography alone. Local Wildlife Site (SINC/SLINC) survey reports and citations were used to help assign land parcels to this category.
Farmyard	Farm buildings and yard.
PARKLAND/OPEN SPACE	
Allotment	Allotment gardens.
Amenity Grassland	This category includes land parcels that are predominantly close-mown amenity grassland with few other features, and which don't form part of a wider land unit of another category (e.g. Parkland, Golf Course). This category does not include playing fields, which are instead mapped in the ' Playing Fields ' category.
Canal	Canals, including any associated towpaths and banks
Cemetery	Cemeteries
Crematorium	Crematoriums and their surrounding grounds
Churchyard - historic	Churchyard dating from before 1840.
Churchyard - other	Churchyard dating from after 1840.
Golf Course	Golf Course, Including areas of woodland, pond etc. within the course.
Hospital Grounds	Hospitals and their surrounding grounds
Orchard	Areas populated with fruit or nut-bearing trees.
Park or Open Space – formal	Publicly-accessible areas with a high level of formal management. These are characterised by being mostly comprised of intensely-mown grassland with scattered trees, with more 'semi-natural habitats' being largely absent. Other features such as boating lakes and formal flowerbeds may also be present.
Park or Open Space – informal	Publicly-accessible areas with a mixed management regime, which may include areas of grassland subject to a lower intensity of mowing. This category includes sites that appear to be partly managed for amenity but include some areas of 'semi-natural habitat' (e.g. woodland, tall herb, hedgerows, scrub or ponds) If the mixture of habitats is more 'semi-natural' in character (i.e. most of the grassland is left to grow long) then the site would instead be placed in the ' Semi-natural Habitat Mosaic ' category.
Parkland - historic	This category includes sites included on the Wood-pasture & Parkland Natural England habitat inventory unless their land-use has changed to another specific type e.g. Golf Course.
Playing Field	Includes public playing fields, private playing fields, school playing fields, sports grounds
Pond/Lake	Land parcels are only mapped in this category if not clearly contained within another wider land use unit and will mostly be mapped as part of a wider landscape unit (e.g. Pasture or Semi-natural Habitat Mosaic).

Land Use Category	Notes
School Grounds	Excludes large school playing fields as these are mapped in the Playing Field category
University/College Grounds	Excludes playing fields as these are mapped in the Playing Field category
Semi-natural Habitat Mosaic	Areas containing semi-natural habitats including ponds, woodland, scrub, tall herb, grassland, stream corridors etc. These habitats may exist as a matrix. This category may include both areas that appear to be managed for wildlife, or which appear subject to no management at all.
Woodland	Land parcels are only mapped in this category if not clearly contained within another wider land use unit. Areas of woodland that exist in a mosaic with other semi-natural habitats are mapped as Semi-natural Habitat Mosaic.
GARDENS	
Garden - large, mature	Large detached, semi-detached houses. Many of these will have mature trees and possibly ponds.
Garden – other	Smaller gardens
UTILITIES, COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL	
Building Site	Previously-developed sites that have recently been cleared and consist of predominantly bare ground or are sites in the process of being built upon.
Caravan Park	Caravan parks.
Open Mosaic Habitat	Sites, that have been cleared or disturbed fairly-recently, but are now developing a mix of primary successional species/habitats.
Premises	Areas that are predominantly hard-standing and contain little or no semi-natural features, e.g. car-parks, commercial premises, industrial buildings.
Premises with Parkland	Areas of landscaped grounds surrounding private premises. This category may include gardens/landscaping associated with apartment blocks, public houses, sections of industrial estate. This category can include buildings but if the amount of hard-standing area (buildings, car parks etc.) comprises a significant amount of the land unit (say, over 50%), then this element should be mapped separately in the Premises category.
Quarry – active	Quarries in active use.
Quarry – Inactive	Quarries that have been inactive for a long-enough period of time for natural vegetation to develop are included in the relevant land use category.
Railway Bank	Banks of active railways or tramways. Banks of disused railways are included in the 'Semi-natural Habitat Mosaic' category.
Sewage Works	Sewage works.
Telecommunications	Transmitting stations and their associated grounds
Power Plant/Sub Station Grounds	Power plants or electricity sub-stations and their associated grounds
Water Treatment Works	Water Treatment Works and their associated grounds

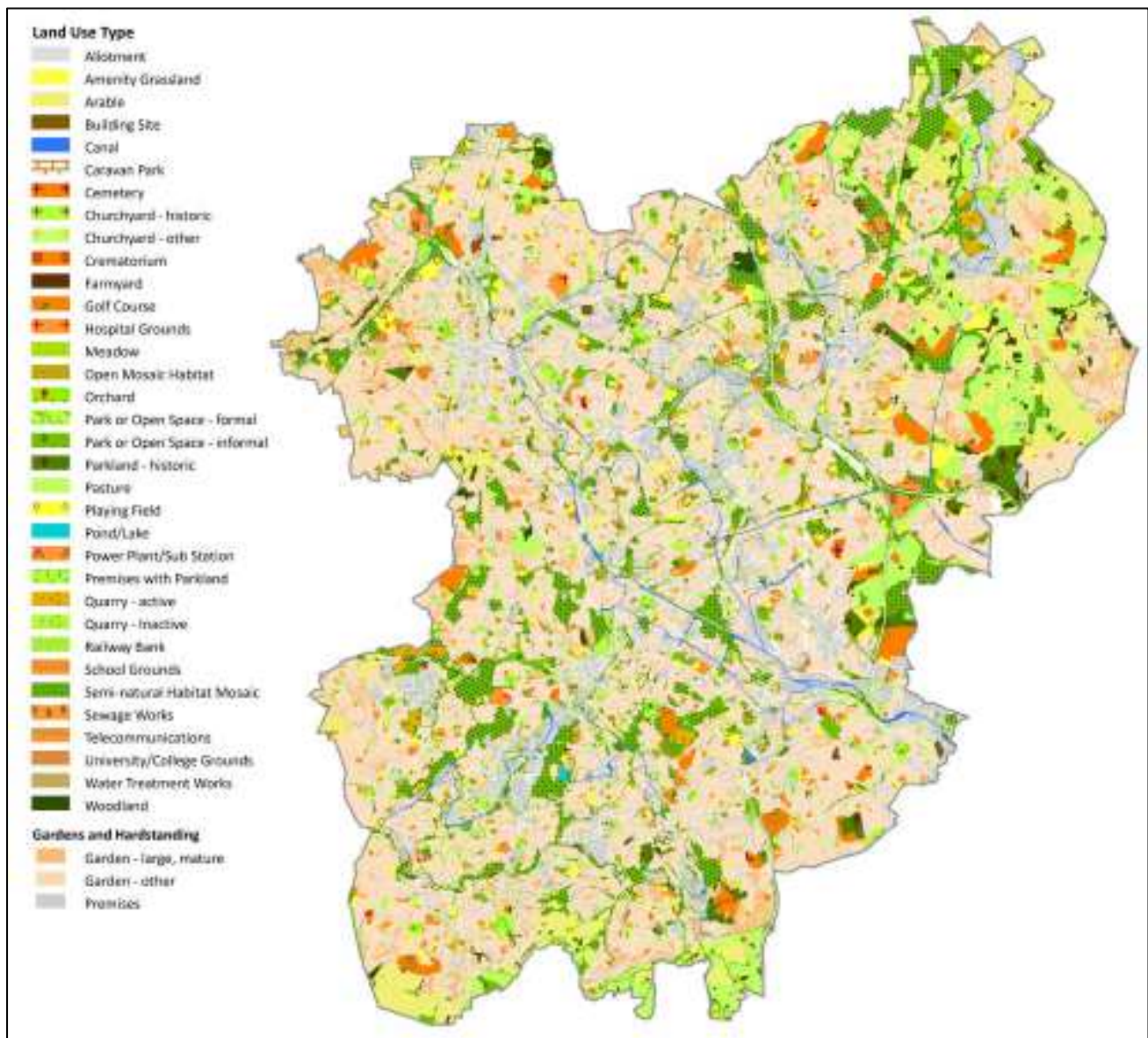


Figure 2. Map showing land use categories

Assigning Ecological Values to each Land Use Category

41. Within each land use category there is likely to be a range in the ecological quality of individual landscape units, depending on what habitat features are present. For example, a golf course with a stream and woodland is likely to be of higher ecological value than a golf course without these features.
42. For each of the land use categories two scores were devised:
 - Minimum Land Use Category (LUC) Score to reflect the likely minimum ecological value of a unit of that land use type.
 - Maximum Land Use Category (LUC) Score to reflect the likely maximum ecological value of that land use type.
43. These scores were assigned based on expert knowledge of the area, including evidence gathered for sites within the current designated site network. The scores for all mapped land use categories are presented in Table 2.
44. **Rationale**

Table 3: Land use category Value scores

Land Use Category	Min LUC Value	Max LUC Value
FARMLAND		
Arable	1	4
Pasture	2	5
Meadow	3	5
Farmyard	1	3
GARDENS		
Garden - large, mature	2	4
Garden – other	1	2
PARKLAND/OPEN SPACE		
Parkland - formal	2	4
Parkland - informal	1	4
Parkland - historic	2	5
Allotment	2	4
Amenity Grassland	1	2
Canal	3	5
Cemetery	1	4
Churchyard	1	4
Golf Course	1	4
Hospital Grounds	1	4
Playing Field	1	3
Pond/Lake	2	5
School Grounds	1	4
University/College Grounds	1	4
Semi-natural Habitat Mosaic	2	5
Woodland	2	5
UTILITIES, COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL		
Caravan Park	1	2
Premises	1	2
Quarry – active	1	3
Quarry – Inactive	2	4
Railway Bank	2	4
Sewage Works	1	4
Power Plant/Sub Station Grounds	1	4

3.1.1.2 Habitat Features

45. **Rationale:** *Landscape units that contain certain habitat features are likely to have a higher ecological value than those which do not.*
46. Landscape units containing an element of water, including streams, ponds or wetland tend to be of higher ecological value than those which do not contain those features, whilst the presence of woodland and species-rich hedgerows is also considered important.
47. Features used in this assessment:
 - Ponds and lakes
 - Rivers and streams
 - Woodland
 - Species-rich hedgerows
48. EcoRecord currently has a reasonably comprehensive GIS layer containing the first three of these features.
49. For 'Species-rich hedgerows' EcoRecord's habitat coverage is less comprehensive so the 'SLINC-designated hedgerows' data set was used as a proxy for this feature.

3.1.1.3 Nature Conservation Designations

Statutory and Non-Statutory Sites

50. **Rationale:** *Landscape units identified as either Statutory or Locally-designated are those known to be of higher ecological value.*
51. The designated site network, made up of statutory sites (SACs, SSSIs), and non-statutory Local Wildlife Sites (SINCs, SLINCs), represent the individual sites that are of the highest ecological value in Birmingham and the Black Country. These sites are designated for their nature conservation value according to a robust set of standards, using the best available evidence.
52. A score was assigned to each of the four designation types encountered in the study area, reflecting the hierarchical nature of the site designation system (see Table 8).

Ancient Woodland

53. **Rationale:** *Landscape units designated as Ancient Woodland are of high ecological value.*
54. Areas of designated Ancient Woodland represent some of the most valuable habitats present in Birmingham and the Black Country.
55. It was therefore decided that landscape units containing Ancient Woodland would always score 5 (Very High) (see Table 7. Evaluation matrix).
56. In order to be comprehensive, the evaluation used a combination of designated Ancient Woodland sites included on the latest Natural England Ancient Woodland Inventory (Natural England, 2019) and EcoRecord's Inventory of 'Probable' and 'Potential' Ancient Woodlands (EcoRecord, 2009).

Wood Pasture and Parkland

57. **Rationale:** *Landscape units designated as Wood Pasture and Parkland are of higher ecological value*
58. Wood Pasture and Parkland is identified as a Habitat of Principal Importance (NERC act 2006).
59. These sites can be of value for hole-nesting birds, saproxylic invertebrates, lichens, fungi on the trees or in the surrounding grassland (Natural England, 2015).
60. It was decided that the presence of Wood Pasture and Parkland would increase the score of those landscape units that contain it in accordance to the rule base outlined in Table 7.
61. The latest Natural England Wood Pasture and Parkland Inventory (Natural England, 2019) data set was used to identify areas of Wood Pasture and Parkland within the study area.

3.1.1.4 Adjacency

62. **Rationale:** *Landscape units directly adjacent to areas of high value (SAC, SSSI, Ancient Woodland) are likely to be of higher ecological value themselves, namely as buffer areas.*
63. SACs, SSSIs and Ancient Woodland sites are considered to contain some of the most valuable habitats of Birmingham and the Black Country.
64. Landscape units directly adjoining SACs, SSSIs and Ancient Woodland perform an important buffer function and may themselves be of higher value as a result of their proximity to a high-quality site.
65. The score of these adjacent landscape units was increased to reflect this, as described in Table 7.

3.1.1.5 Age of the Landscape – Historic Landscape Characterisation

66. **Rationale:** *Farmland which has had a continuous land use for a longer time will be of a higher ecological value than more recently-enclosed farmland.*
67. Due to the way in which ancient farmland was created and the period of time over which it has evolved, it frequently contains features and a level of structural complexity not found in more recently enclosed-farmland. In addition, ancient farmland will often support a higher number of slow-colonising species. Age is often therefore an important factor in determining the likely ecological value of farmland.
68. Birmingham's Landscape Characterisation (reference) was used to attribute an HLC Type to each farmland landscape unit.
69. This criterion is only applied to the following Land Use Categories:
 - Arable
 - Pasture
70. Values were assigned to the HLC Type farmland categories as shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Values assigned to each HLC category

HLC Type Name	Value
Ancient unenclosed pasture	5 (Very High)
Irregular enclosure	5
Piecemeal enclosure	5
Other enclosed fields	4 (High)
Paddocks & closes	4
Squatter enclosures	4
Planned enclosure	(Medium)

71. The following are the reasons why HLC categories have only been used to modify the score of farmland (land use categories: Arable and Pasture) and not that of other land use types:
- Where land-use has changed, the HLC type only recognises the most recent change, and not the history before that, e.g. some historic parklands have been assigned the HLC Type of 'Country Park/nature reserve' as they have been designated as such in more recent times (i.e. mid-late 20th century).
 - Most of the land use categories are already defined by some degree by age, e.g. canals and churchyards, and an ecological value has been assigned to take account for this.
 - The Ancient Woodland and Wood-pasture and Parkland inventories were found to be a more useful age-determiner than HLC for other land use categories (see section 0).

3.1.1.6 Position in the Landscape

72. **Rationale:** *Landscape units within areas of higher recorded botanical value are likely to be of higher ecological value than those in areas of lower recorded botanical value.*
73. In addition to the network of sites designated for their conservation value, it is necessary to understand and evaluate the ecological value of the wider landscape.
74. To achieve this, comprehensive survey data that covers the whole area is required.
75. In Birmingham and the Black Country this has been achieved through a comprehensive survey of vascular plant diversity which took place between 1995-2012 for the production of the Flora of Birmingham and the Black Country (Trueman et al., 2013). This data set is especially useful given that there is no comprehensive and current habitat data available for the area.
76. The Flora of Birmingham and the Black Country described and analysed a data set containing 240,000 plant records gathered during systematic recording of the area during the recording period.
77. This set of comprehensive botanical data is referred to here, for ease of reference, as the Flora data set.
78. A list of all the spontaneously present species recorded during the survey period was prepared for every one of the 715 one-kilometre squares ('monads') which make up the recording area – the Birmingham and Black Country (B&BC) conurbation.
79. Many of the 1449 species recorded in the Flora survey are widely distributed in the landscape and are therefore not appropriate markers of biodiversity. Others may be much scarcer but represent recent incursions from cultivation or other forms of introduction and do not characterise vegetation of nature conservation value. Other relatively uncommon species, designated as 'axiophytes', tend to be associated with sites with nature conservation value and constitute a good surrogate for indicating habitat richness.

Axiophyte Analysis

80. The BSBI axiophyte project (<http://www.bsbi.org.uk/axiophytes.html>) defines axiophytes as the 40% of species that are "indicators of habitat that is considered important for conservation, such as ancient woodlands, clear water and species-rich meadows."
81. Analysis of the Flora data set identified 192 axiophyte species and five associated hybrids which are strongly associated with natural and semi-natural sites in B&BC.

82. In addition, 55 axiophyte species, one hybrid and two subspecies were identified to be associated with important artificial and secondary sites. This includes some aquatic and wetland plants associated with canals, plus a small number associated with cultivation.
83. A coincidence map of axiophyte species showed that axiophyte diversity varies considerably across the conurbation and helped to identify areas with strong focuses of axiophyte diversity.
84. The analysis of the Flora data set in this way provides a valuable proxy for identifying areas of higher habitat quality/value across the entire conurbation, albeit on a 1km²/monad basis.

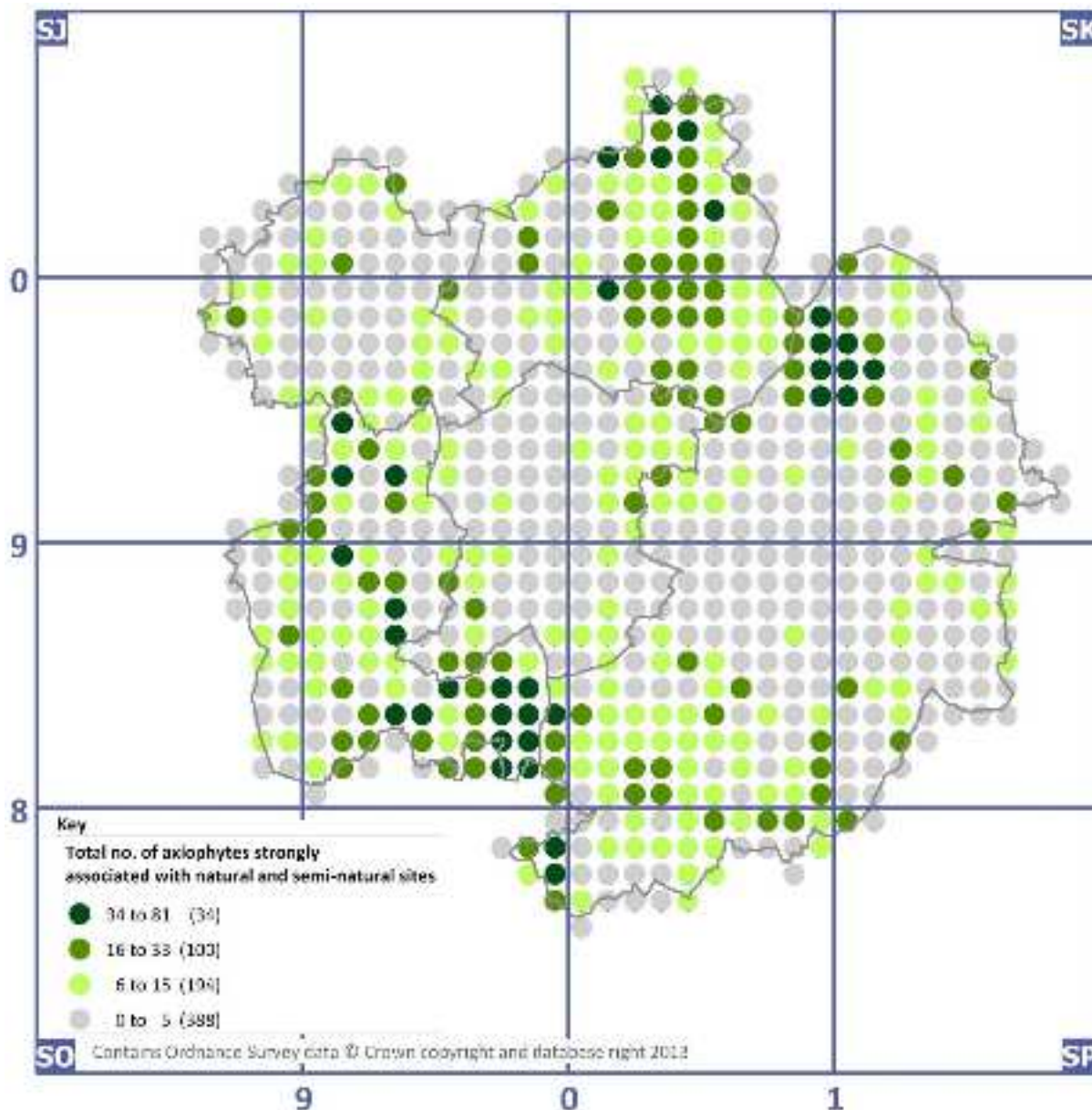


Figure 3. Map showing total no. of axiophytes strongly associated with natural and semi-natural sites

85. This map (Figure 3) is thus a surrogate for habitat richness across the conurbation, albeit at the monad (100 hectares) level (and therefore not every area within the monad will necessarily be equally valuable habitat).
86. The analysis of the number of axiophytes present per monad showed that the majority of monads have relatively low numbers of axiophyte species. Just over 390 monads have 8 axiophytes or less and are considered to be in the Low Axiophytes Range (8 axiophytes or less). At the other extreme, there are 80 monads that have 28 (90th centile) or more axiophyte species, thus these are considered to contain the

most valuable habitats in the area – High Axiophytes Range (28+ axiophytes present). The remaining 245 monads are therefore in the Medium Axiophytes Range (9 to 27 axiophytes present). The axiophyte category (Low, Medium or High Axiophyte Range) of a monad is used to determine the final ecological value of a particular landscape unit as described below (see Table 5).

TWINSpan Analysis

87. The Flora data set was also analysed to compare each of the 1km squares (monads) in the conurbation with one another, on the basis of all taxa recorded in each of those monads.
88. The analysis was carried out using TWINSpan (Hill 1979; Hill & Šmilauer 2005) which identifies the strongest numerical trend in different monads and divides them into groups at the average position on the trend (based on how similar the vegetation is when comparing monads with each other). The result is a classification of each monad into one of seven, similar character, ecological divisions – see table and map below taken from pg. 144 of the Flora of Birmingham and the Black Country (Trueman et al., 2013):

Table 5: The principal botanical/ecological divisions of B&BC at the monad level

Name		TWINSpan groups	No. monads	No. spp. per monad	Description of groups of monads
Suburban	Habitat-poor	000	207	168	Residential and intensive agricultural land use predominates, markedly semi-natural habitats lacking.
	Habitat-rich	001	109	201	Residential and intensive agricultural land use predominates, semi-natural habitats, especially old woodlands, present.
Industrial	Industrial/Suburban	010	164	185	Industry a predominant feature in the flora, species-rich open water habitats absent.
	Industrial/Open-water	011	73	170	Industry a predominant feature in the flora, moderately species-rich open water habitats (usually canals) present.
Rich Semi-natural	Heath & Mire	11	12	212	Significant amounts of rich semi-natural vegetation present, typically with a species-rich flora of wet and dry heaths and often of more mesotrophic mires and wet grassland.
	Open-water Semi-natural	100	53	224	Significant amounts of rich semi-natural vegetation present, characteristically species-rich open water flora (typically canal flora).
	Wooded Semi-natural	101	37	253	Significant amounts of rich semi-natural vegetation present, typically species-rich woodland flora.

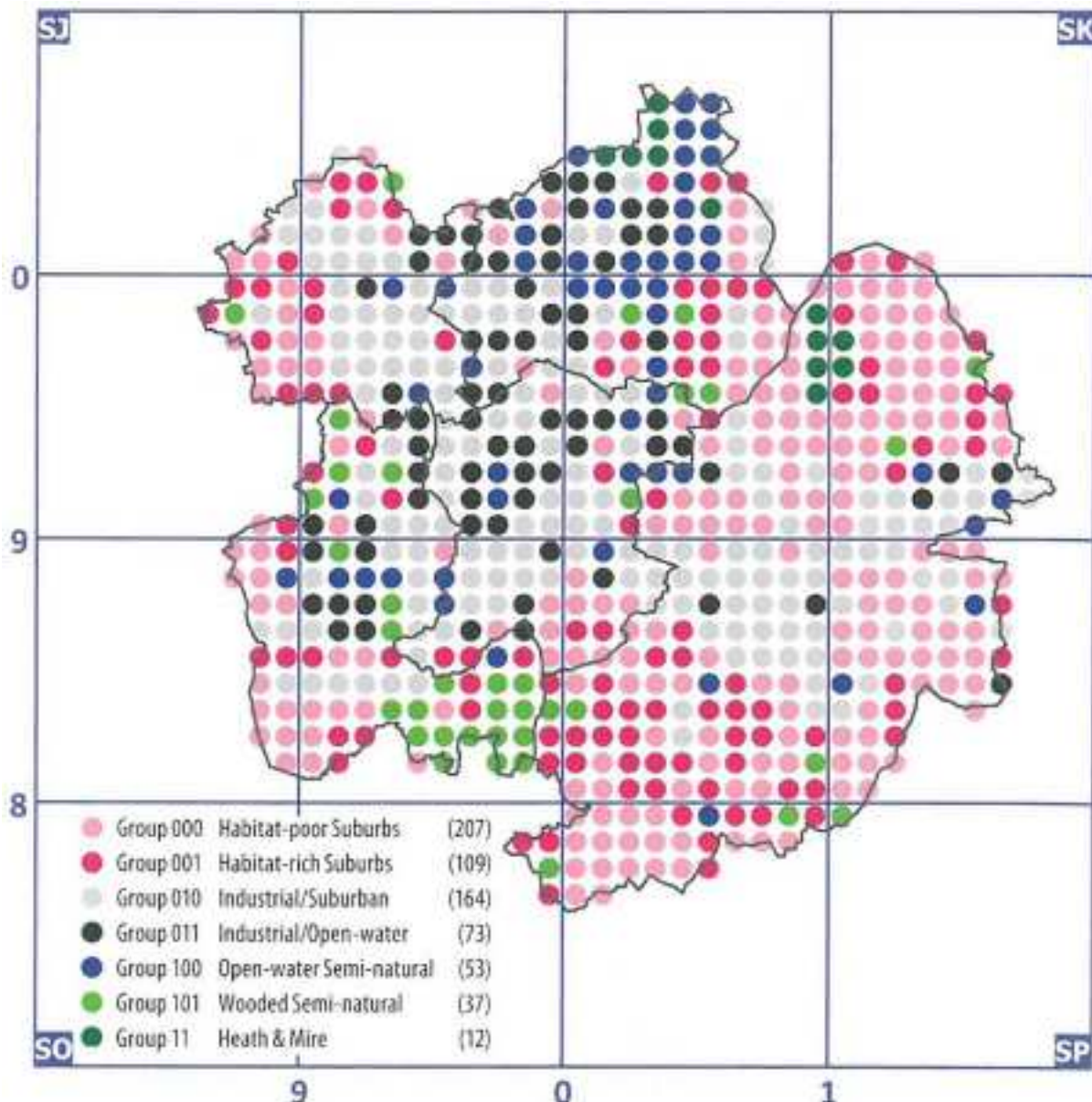


Figure 4: Division of the B&BC monads into seven TWINSPAN groups: monads classified in the Rich Semi-natural category (TWINSPAN groups 100, 101 and 11) represent the areas in B&BC with the highest ecological value.

Combination of Axiophyte and TWINSPAN analysis

89. The numbers of axiophytes recorded in a particular monad have a positive correlation with the intrinsic richness of the ecological division or TWINSPAN group in which that monad has been classified.
90. Whilst the TWINSPAN analysis provides a description of the overall ecological character of each monad (defined by the TWINSPAN group), the number of axiophytes (defined by the Axiophyte Range) indicates the degree to which valuable habitats are present in that monad.
91. Therefore, by considering the combination of the TWINSPAN and Axiophyte categories a relative evaluation/score (Twinspan-Axiophyte Value – TAV) for each individual monad can be arrived at.

Assigning an Twinspan-Axiophyte Value (TAV) score to each monad

92. The TAV value score was used in modifying the values of individual landscape units as described in Table 8.
93. A score from 1 – Low Ecological Value to 5 – High Ecological Value was derived from the combination of the TWINSPAN group and number of axiophyte species recorded for each monad as outlined in Table 5.
94. Monads classified in a ‘Rich Semi-natural’ category (TWINSPAN groups 100, 101, 11) and with a high number of axiophytes or were considered to be those of the highest ecological value.
95. This combined score (TAV) was therefore used to modify the score of individual landscape units according to the TAV value of the overlapping monad following the rule base described in Table 6.

Table 6: Table showing show the TAV values were assigned

TWINSPAN group	Axiophyte Range	TAV Value
000 (Habitat-poor Suburbs)	28+	*
	9-27	2
	1-8	1
001 (Habitat-rich Suburbs)	28+	4
	9-27	3
	1-8	2
010 (Industrial/Suburban)	28+	3
	9-27	2
	1-8	1
011 (Industrial/Open-water)	28+	*
	9-27	3
	1-8	2
100 (Open Water Semi-natural)	28+	5
	9-27	4
	1-8	*
101 (Wooded Semi-natural)	28+	5
	9-27	4
	1-8	*
11 (Heath & Mire)	28+	5
	9-27	*
	1-8	*

* = there were no monads in this TWINSPAN group that fell into this axiophyte range

- Part Monads - i.e. those which were only partly in B&BC - weren't included in the original TWINSPAN analysis. These part monads inherited the TAV value of the adjacent monad(s).
- Each landscape unit inherited the TAV value of the monad that contained it.
- Where a landscape unit overlapped more than one monad, it inherited the highest TAV value of the overlapping monads.

3.1.1.7 Farmland Birds

96. **Rationale:** *Arable fields in tetrads (2km x 2km squares) with a higher number of recorded breeding farmland bird species, are likely to be important for these species.*
97. A number of bird species are dependent on arable land, to a greater or lesser extent. This makes them particularly good indicators of the value of this type of land use, which is one whose ecological value isn't especially well described by botanical interest alone (as is generally the case with other land use types). Some species of farmland birds have shown very significant declines in the UK since the 1970s. With species, like Grey Partridge, Tree Sparrow and Corn Bunting declining by 90% over this period (Newton, 2017).
98. Table 6 shows the species of farmland birds considered in the study, with those species currently declining in the UK (Eaton et al., 2015) identified by their current UK conservation concern status, published in the most recent [Birds of Conservation Concern](#) (BoCC4) (December 2015). Eight out of the 11 species considered are currently on the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern (Eaton et al., 2015). One other species, Little Owl, despite not being currently listed has suffered declines of over 50% between 1970 and 2013, according to data from the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) (Newton, 2017).
99. To better reflect the ecological value of arable land the Breeding Bird Survey (Clements, 2003) data set was used. This was a systematic survey carried out from 1998 to 2003 that recorded all birds breeding/seen in each tetrad (2km x 2km square) of Birmingham and the Black Country.
100. A coincidence map of farmland bird species, which are particularly dependant on arable fields for breeding habitat, was produced to identify those areas of which contain arable fields of greater ecological value on the basis of the presence of these indicator species.

Table 7: List of 11 farmland bird species used in the analysis:

Farmland Birds
Red-legged Partridge
Grey Partridge
Lapwing
Skylark
Corn Bunting
Yellow Wagtail
Barn Owl
Tree Sparrow
Little Owl
Linnet
Yellowhammer

- Arable landscape units within higher-scoring breeding farmland bird tetrads were scored more highly than those in lower scoring tetrads (see Table 7).

3.1.1.8 Assigning a Final Combined Ecological Value

101. The rule base used to calculate the final ecological value score for each landscape unit based on the various criteria is described in Table 7 – The Evaluation Matrix.

102. The criteria used:

- Land Use Type
- Habitat Features
- Nature Conservation Designation Value
- Adjacency to SACs, SSSIs or Ancient Woodland
- Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Type Value
- Twinspan-Axiophyte Value (TAV)
- Breeding Farmland Birds Value

103. In broad terms, the application of the rule base is as follows:

- A landscape unit is first assigned an ecological value based on a combination of the land use category/habitat features and where that unit is located in the landscape (TAV categories) (Table 7, Part 1).
- This ecological value may then be modified upwards (but not downwards) if the landscape unit qualifies against any of the criteria in parts 2, 3 or 4 (Table 7, Parts 2, 3 & 4).
- If the landscape unit qualifies against multiple criteria it will inherit the highest of the possible values.

Table 8: Evaluation Matrix

LAND USE

Land Use Category	Condition	TAV1	TAV2	TAV3	TAV4	TAV5
Allotments	All	2	2	3	4	4
Amenity Grassland	With stream	2	2	2	2	2
	1+ features	1	1	2	2	2
	No features	1	1	1	1	1
Arable	SLINC hedge and HLC5 or HLC4	2	2	2	3	4
	1+ features and HLC5 or HLC4	2	2	2	3	4
	SLINC hedge and HLC3	1	2	2	3	3
	No features and HLC5 or HLC4	1	2	2	2	3
	1+ features and HLC 3	1	2	2	2	3
	No features and HLC3	1	1	1	1	1
Canal	All	3	3	3	4	5
Caravan Park	With stream	2	2	2	2	2
	1+ features	1	1	2	2	2
	No features	1	1	1	1	1
Cemetery	With stream	2	2	3	3	4
	1+ features	2	2	2	3	4
	No features	1	1	1	2	3
Churchyard - other	With stream	2	2	3	3	4
	1+ features	2	2	2	3	4

Land Use Category	Condition	TAV1	TAV2	TAV3	TAV4	TAV5
	No features	1	1	1	2	3
Churchyard - historic	With stream	2	2	3	3	4
	1+ features	2	2	2	3	4
	No features	2	2	2	3	3
Crematorium	With stream	2	2	3	3	4
	1+ features	1	1	2	3	3
	No features	1	1	1	2	3
Building Site	No features	1	1	1	1	1
Farmyard	With stream	2	2	2	3	3
	1+ features	2	2	2	2	2
	No features	1	1	1	2	2
Garden – Large, Mature	With stream	2	2	2	3	3
	1+ features	1	1	2	3	3
	No features	1	1	1	2	2
Garden - Other	With stream	2	2	2	2	2
	No stream	1	1	1	2	2
Golf Course	With stream	2	2	3	4	4
	1+ features	2	2	3	3	4
	No features	1	1	1	2	3
Hospital Grounds	With stream	2	2	3	3	4
	1+ features	1	1	2	3	3
	No features	1	1	1	2	3
Meadow	All	3	3	3	4	5
Open Mosaic Habitat	With stream	2	2	3	3	4
	1+ features	2	2	2	3	4
	No features	2	2	2	3	3
Orchard	All	2	2	3	3	4
Park or Open Space - formal	With stream	2	2	3	3	4
	1+ features	2	2	2	3	3
	No features	1	1	1	2	3
Park or Open Space - informal	With stream	2	2	3	4	4
	1+ features	2	2	2	3	4
	No features	2	2	2	2	3
Parkland - historic	All	2	3	3	4	5
Pasture	HLC4&5 plus Stream or Standing Water	3	3	3	5	5
	HLC4&5 plus SLINC hedge	2	2	3	4	4
	HLC4&5 plus Woodland	2	2	3	3	4
	HLC4&5 with no features	2	2	3	3	3
	HLC<=3 plus Stream or Standing water	3	3	3	3	4
	HLC<=3 plus SLINC hedge	2	2	3	3	3
	HLC<=3 plus Woodland	2	2	2	3	3
	HLC<=3 with no features	2	2	2	3	3

Land Use Category	Condition	TAV1	TAV2	TAV3	TAV4	TAV5
Playing Field	With stream	2	2	2	3	3
	1+ features	1	1	2	2	2
	No features	1	1	1	2	2
Pond/Lake	All	2	3	3	4	5
Power Plant/Sub Station Grounds	With stream	2	2	3	3	4
	1+ features	2	2	2	3	3
	No features	1	1	1	2	3
Premises	With stream	2	2	2	2	2
	No stream	1	1	1	1	1
Premises with Parkland	With stream	2	2	3	3	4
	1+ features	1	1	2	3	3
	No features	1	1	1	2	3
Quarry - active	With stream	2	2	3	3	3
	1+ features	2	2	2	3	3
	No features	1	1	2	2	2
Quarry - inactive	With stream	2	2	3	3	4
	1+ features	2	2	2	3	4
	No features	2	2	2	3	3
Railway Bank	All	2	2	2	3	4
School Grounds	With stream	2	2	3	3	4
	1+ features	1	1	2	3	3
	No features	1	1	1	2	3
Semi-natural Habitat Mosaic	All	2	3	3	4	5
Sewage Works	With stream	2	2	3	3	4
	1+ features	2	2	2	3	3
	No features	1	1	1	2	3
Telecommunications	With stream	2	2	3	3	4
	1+ features	1	1	2	3	3
	No features	1	1	1	2	3
University/College Grounds	With stream	2	2	3	3	4
	1+ features	1	1	2	3	3
	No features	1	1	1	2	3
Water Treatment Works	With stream	2	2	3	3	4
	1+ features	2	2	2	3	3
	No features	1	1	1	2	3
Woodland	All	2	3	3	4	5

DECLINING FARMLAND BIRDS

Land Use Category	Condition	FB1 (0-2sp)	FB2 (3-5 sp)	FB3 (6-8 sp)
Arable	All	1	2	3

DESIGNATIONS

Designation Type	Condition	TAV1	TAV2	TAV3	TAV4	TAV5
SAC	All	5	5	5	5	5
SSSI	All	5	5	5	5	5
SINC	All	3	3	4	5	5
SLINC	All	3	3	3	4	5
Ancient Woodland	Ancient Woodland (and landscape units of other Land Use Categories containing Ancient Woodland)	5	5	5	5	5
Wood pasture and Parkland	Sites on Natural England's Wood pasture and Parkland inventory	2	3	3	4	5

ADJACENCY

Feature	Value Score
Adjacent to SAC or SSSI	Treat as if landscape unit is in TAV 5 but with an upper category cap of 4
Adjacent to Ancient Woodland	Treat as if landscape unit is in TAV 5 but with an upper category cap of 4

3.1.2 Ecological evaluation results

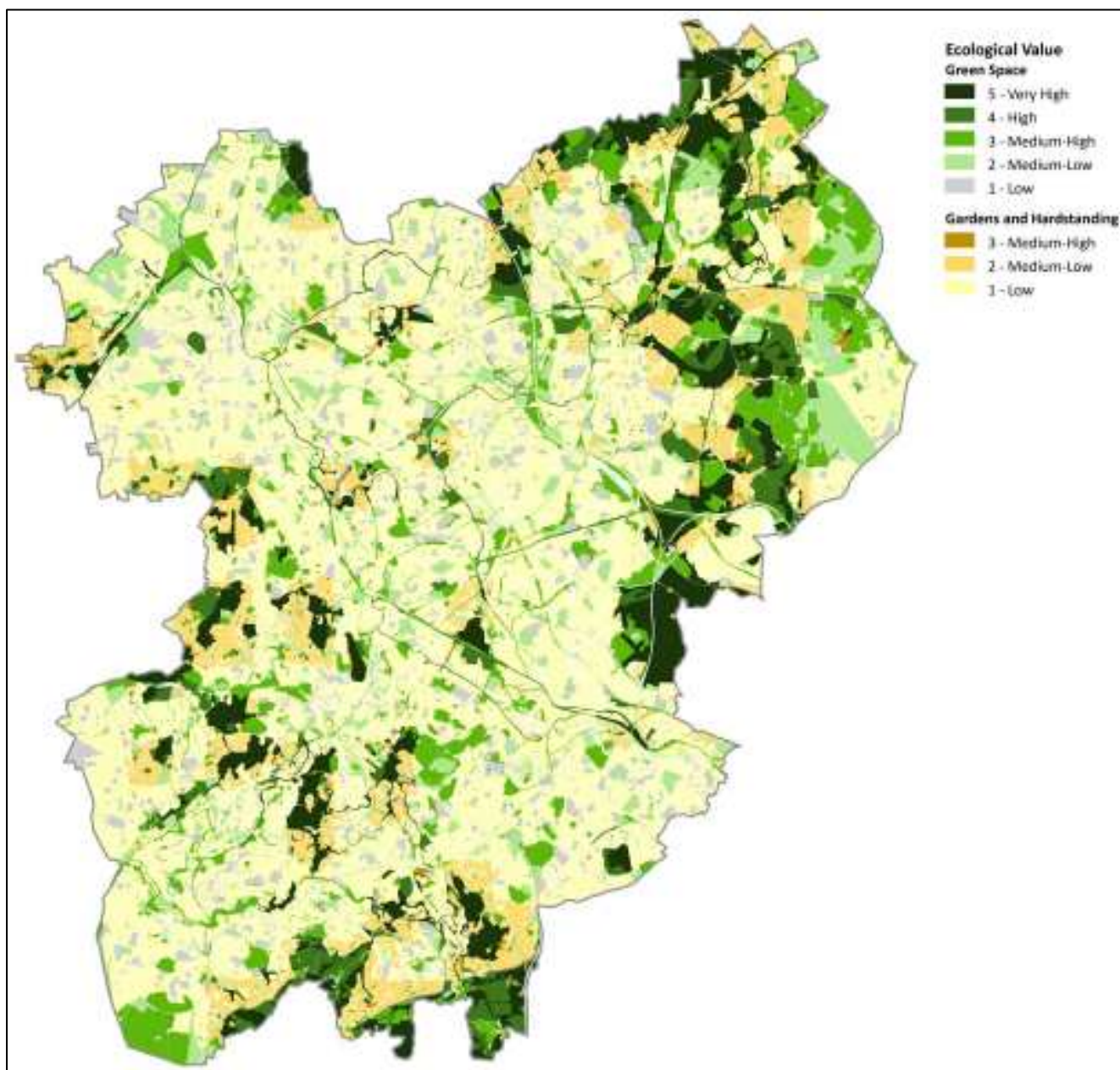


Figure 5. Ecological evaluation of the Black Country results map

3.2 Habitat connectivity analysis

104. A preliminary analysis of woodland habitat connectivity was carried out using the satellite derived habitat data set produced in 2019. A further analysis was carried out using core areas as well as an analysis of heathland connectivity in the Walsall area, as part of a wider ambition of improving/restoring habitat connectivity between Cannock Chase SSSI and Sutton Park SSSI. As previously mentioned Condatis v1.1. was used for this purpose.
105. Condatis is a decision support tool that assists with the identification of the best locations for habitat creation and restoration to help enhance existing habitat networks and increase connectivity across landscapes.
106. As a decision support tool, Condatis:
- Highlights pathways that allow both dispersal and multiplication of species as they cross a landscape
 - Pinpoints bottlenecks in the habitat network (where current opportunities for colonisation are being restricted)
 - Ranks the feasible sites for habitat creation and restoration to enhance the existing habitat network efficiently
 - Allows new habitat to be added to test the impact of habitat creation in precise locations
107. So far this analysis has, for example, enabled the identification of woodland habitat bottleneck areas which, if affected, can have a very significant impact on the permeability of the landscape and a severe negative impact on the ability species have to move through the landscape. An example of such bottleneck areas is shown in Figure 6. The land units that overlap these areas have been identified and included as a key component of the NRN map as described below (see Figure 7). Additional analysis is still being carried out/due for other habitats and the wider area, namely using the more recently available version of the satellite derived habitat data set.

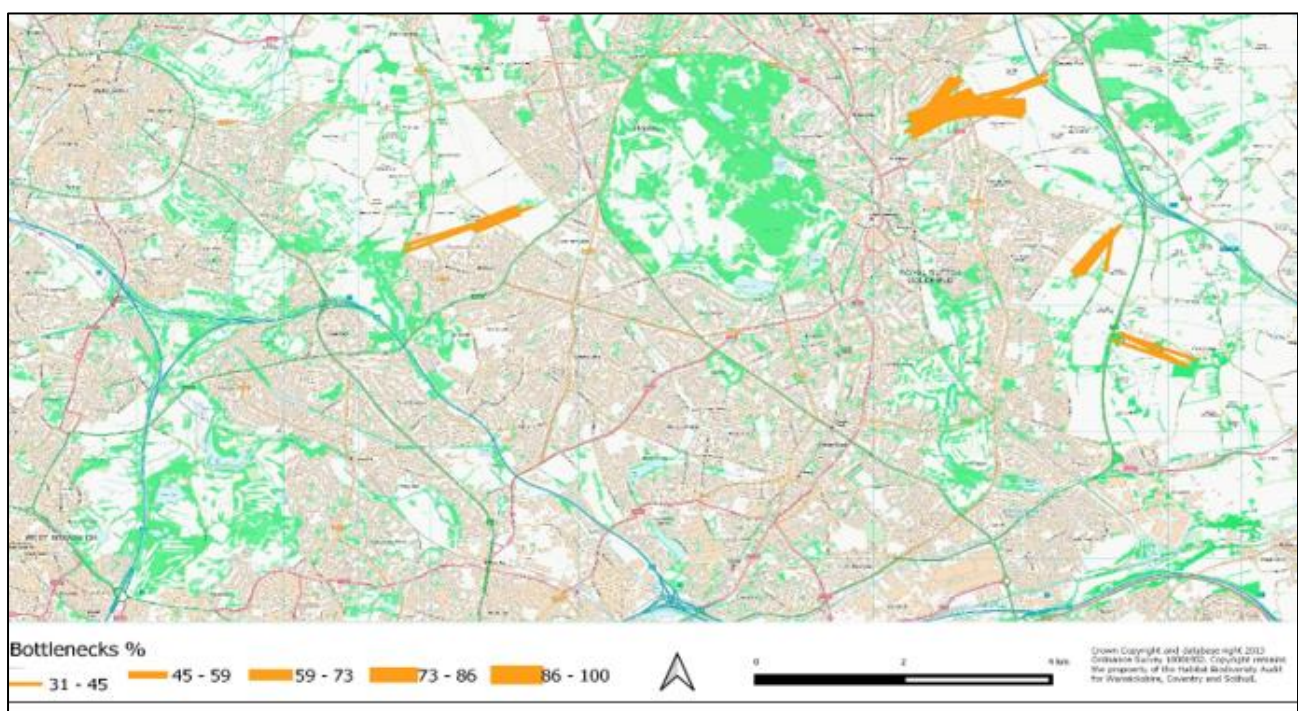


Figure 6. Woodland bottleneck areas

3.3 Review of NRN guidance, national data sets and tools

108. A comprehensive review of the current guidance was carried out. Data and tools available were researched and used as applicable at this stage (main reference used in this work: NE NRN Toolkit V1), namely the [England Combined Habitat Networks Data set](#). This was used not only to identify important habitat/habitat enhancement/restoration within the conurbation but also, and more importantly, to provide the wider network context beyond the Black Country's boundary. This data set describes the geographic extent and location of Habitat Networks for 18 priority habitats based primarily, but not exclusively, on the priority habitat inventory, with additional data added in relation to habitat restoration-creation, restorable habitat, plus fragmentation action, and network enhancement and expansion zones. The maps are created following a standardised process that incorporates a range of data layers and identifies specific locations for a range of actions to help improve the ecological resilience for each of the habitats/habitat networks.

3.4 Producing a Nature Recovery Network Map for the Black Country

109. Guidance on the components of the Nature Recovery Network map are yet to be available. Further guidance from Defra is expected in due-course and will be incorporated in the future development of the Black Country's Nature Recovery Network map.
110. The starting point of the approach taken is the Ecological Evaluation map, which describes the relative ecological value of the Black Country's landscape. The evaluation work was primarily focused in areas of green space, though a broad assessment of residential areas has also been carried out.

3.4.1 Components of the Black Country Nature Recovery Network Map

111. As specific NRN development guidance is not yet available, the approach taken builds on previous approaches and terminology used in ecological network mapping. The description of the components as well as the criteria for land parcels to be assigned to each of these is below:
112. **Core Habitat Zone**
The Core Habitat Zone is comprised of the land use parcels that contain the most ecologically valuable habitats. The zone includes all parcels with an ecological value score of 4 or above (see ecological evaluation methodology); all sites with a nature conservation designation not included in the above (e.g. some Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation); and any additional areas identified in Natural England's Combined Habitat Network data set. The Core Habitat Zone is a priority for protection and restoration.
113. **Core Expansion Zone 1**
Core Expansion Zone 1 comprises those land use parcels that are of lower ecological value than those in the Core Habitat Zone but, due to inherent value or location, have the most potential to contribute to a coherent ecological network. These sites are frequently within Core Landscapes and Priority Network Restoration Zones and are a priority for investment in the restoration and creation of new habitats. Included in this zone are all areas of green space scoring 3 in the ecological evaluation; all green space scoring 1 or 2 lying within 150 metres of a Core Habitat Zone; those areas identified as habitat bottlenecks; and vegetated railway cuttings and embankments.

114. Core Expansion Zone 2

Core Expansion Zone 2 comprises all areas of greenspace that do not meet the criteria for inclusion in Zone 1. These sites provide an opportunity for the restoration and creation of new habitats but investment in these areas is a lower priority than in Zone 1.

115. Urban Matrix Recovery Zone 1

Urban Matrix Recovery Zone 1 comprises all features of the built environment within 150 metres of the Core Habitat Zone, and may include residential and commercial properties, gardens, road verges, street trees and minor watercourses. Due to their proximity to sites of ecological value these features have the most potential of their type to contribute to a coherent ecological network. The protection, enhancement and creation of green infrastructure within these areas is a priority.

116. Urban Matrix Recovery Zone 2

Urban Matrix Recovery Zone 2 comprises all features of the built environment outside of Zone 1. These areas provide an opportunity for the protection, enhancement and creation of green infrastructure but investment in these areas is of a lower priority than in Zone 1.

117. National Habitat Network

Natural England's Combined Habitat Networks data set (see 3.3).

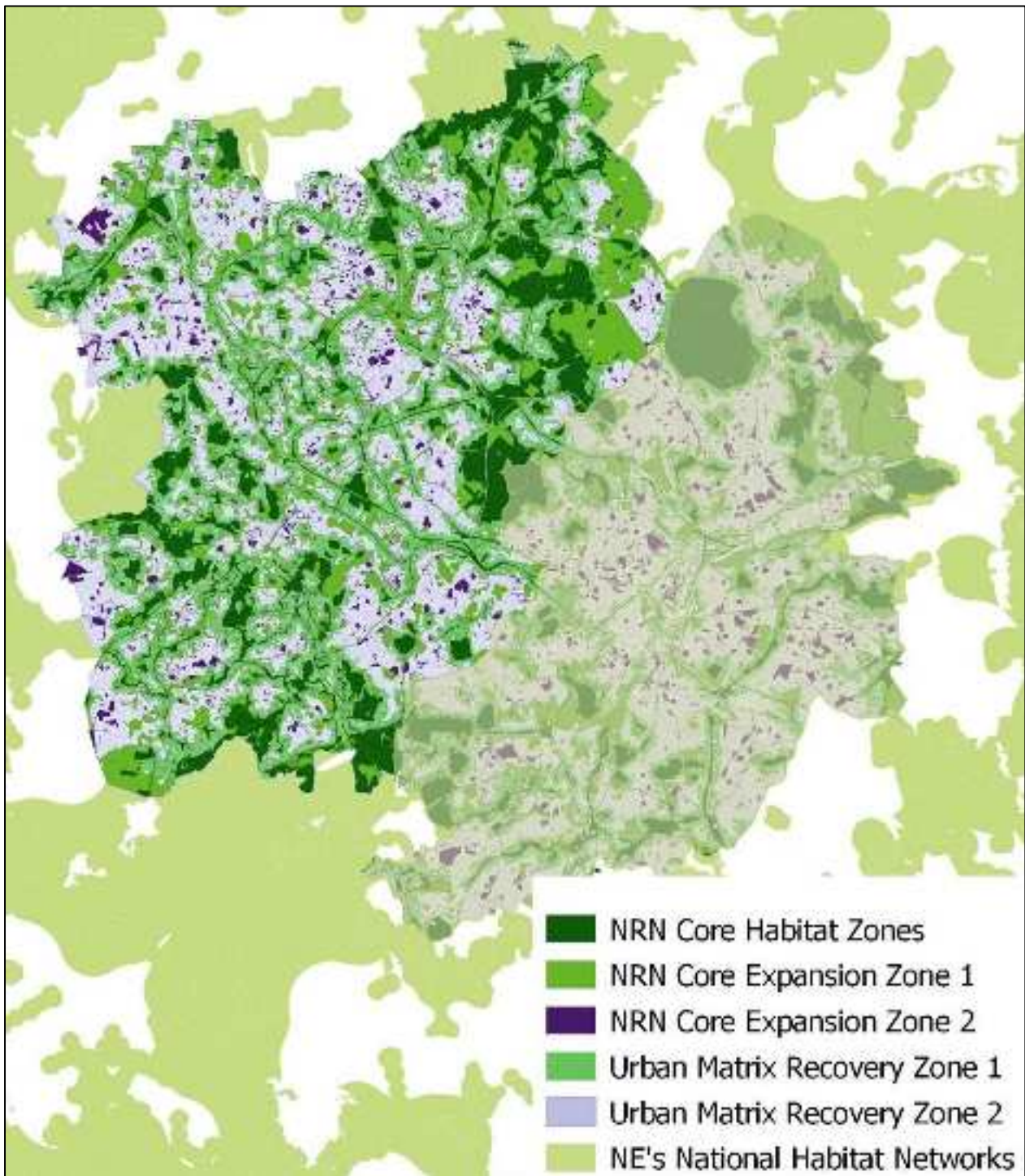


Figure 7. Draft Black Country Nature Recovery Network Map

4. Task 3: Draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map & Priority Biodiversity Actions

4.1 Background to Local Nature Recovery Strategies

118. LNRSs are a new system of spatial strategies for nature, contained in the government's flagship Environment Bill [made mandatory by the Environment Act, November 2021]. The strategies have been designed to work closely alongside other measures in the Bill [Act]. They will, for example, support delivery of mandatory biodiversity net gain and provide a focus for a strengthened duty on all public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. They will also underpin the Nature Recovery Network, alongside work to develop partnerships and to integrate nature into our [Defra's] incentives and land management activities (Defra, 2021).
119. LNRS are designed as tools to drive more coordinated, practical and focussed action to help nature. Each strategy will, for the area that it covers:
- Map the most valuable existing habitat for nature.
 - Map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.
 - Agree priorities for nature's recovery (Defra, 2021).
120. The production of each LNRS will be evidence based, locally led and collaborative, to help create a network of shared plans that public, private and voluntary sectors can all help to deliver. This will provide a locally-owned foundation to the developing Nature Recovery Network, identifying the places which, once action has been taken on the ground, will enable the network to grow over time. This in turn will help achieve wider environmental objectives, like carbon sequestration to mitigate climate change or managing flood risk, and contribute to green economic recovery objectives (Defra, 2021).
121. The government anticipates each strategy will cover an area roughly county sized and they will cover the entirety of England with no gaps or overlaps. The Defra Secretary of State will appoint a "responsible authority" to lead production of each strategy from the list of potential public bodies set out in the Bill [Act]. They are public bodies that, by and large, have a strong knowledge of the local area and democratic mandates, ensuring necessary legitimacy and local ownership (Defra, 2021).
122. The core purpose of LNRSs is to help reverse an ongoing decline of nature and biodiversity in England. To do this, a key feature of the strategies is that they will identify areas that are already of importance for nature, along with areas that could become of particular importance and where the recovery or enhancement of biodiversity could make a particular contribution to other environmental benefits. In other words, LNRSs will identify where we should take action for nature's recovery as well as where nature-based solutions can help address wider environmental problems (Defra, 2021).
123. Key examples of environmental issues where LNRSs and nature-based solutions could play a role are:

- Climate change mitigation through tree planting and peat restoration.
- Natural flood management.
- Improved water quality.

(Defra, 2021)

4.2 National LNRS Pilots

124. From August 2020 to May 2021 Defra ran five Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) pilots to test the preparation process, produce prototype strategies and look at how LNRSs can align with other environmental strategies at a local level. The five pilots were coordinated by Natural England and hosted by Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Buckinghamshire Council, Cornwall Council, Northumberland County Council and Cumbria County Council.

125. The pilots had three main objectives:

- Test a new process for preparing a LNRS based on the requirements set out in the Bill and to share experience to help develop future policy.
- Create prototype LNRSs to demonstrate what an LNRS could look like, to support national rollout.
- Consider how LNRSs will fit with existing spatial planning tools, such as National Park management plans, local plans, river basin management plans, and increasingly bring priorities together into a single strategy over time.

126. The pilots contained the two key LNRS elements, as laid out in the Bill:

- A statement of biodiversity priorities
- A local habitat map

127. The pilot leads worked collaboratively with existing local partnerships and stakeholders to agree the top priorities for nature recovery in their area (statement of biodiversity priorities) and to map where action might be taken to delivery those priorities (local habitat map).

128. The pilots followed a six-step process:

- Step 0: Defra group provides a map of each LNRS area, including habitats and national conservation sites
- Step 1: locally held data is added to the map, including locally identified wildlife sites
- Step 2: description of the LNRS area, including its key habitats and potential opportunities to create or improve them, based on ecological sub-areas
- Step 3: identification of outcomes, achieved through creation or improvement of habitat, and categorisation of those outcomes into priority and other
- Step 4: potential measures for creating or improving habitat to achieve the priority and other outcomes (a statement of biodiversity priorities is produced)
- Step 5: mapping of suitable locations for the delivery of the potential measures onto map of existing habitat (established in Steps 0 and 1) (Defra, 2021)

4.2.1 LNRS Pilots – Lessons Learned

129. Individual pilot prototypes are to be shared online by the local authority leads in due-course and these will be valuable in shaping the next steps of the approach to be taken in the Black Country.

130. In July 2021 Defra published lessons learned grouped into five themes:

Preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies

The pilots showed how responsible authorities can best set up for the LNRS process:

- strong leadership and transparency from the responsible authority was crucial in getting others involved from the outset
- establishing good governance quickly was important - all of the pilots had a 'pilot area team' which included Defra group arm's-length bodies, environmental non-governmental organisations, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, other local planning authorities and Local Nature Partnership representatives.
- tapping into existing networks was crucial given the time constraints, but LNRSs require a wide range of inputs and no single existing group can provide this

Resources and capacity

LNRSs need to be adequately resourced with appropriate expertise and capacity to have the required impact:

- LNRSs require contributions from different parts of an organisation at different stages - for instance, Natural England and the Environment Agency required input from several different specialist officers
- existing capacity within the responsible authority is important to completing the process quickly and effectively - the pilot areas had existing capacity, but we recognise that this is not likely to be the case everywhere. The skills required included project management, stakeholder engagement as well as technical skills
- responsible authorities have to draw on partners to give them the capacity and expertise they need - they will not have everything they need 'in-house' so will need to draw on others, for instance by bringing in ecology, data analysis and geographic information system expertise
- resource needs will be different between responsible authorities depending on local circumstances like geography or administrative set up

Data and evidence

Good and accessible data is essential to the preparation of LNRSs. There were a number of important lessons here, including:

- national-level habitats information provided to the pilots by Defra and Natural England was too voluminous and hard to use locally - Defra will further consider how best to support responsible authorities with the information it provides to them, including via a national habitat map (a requirement in the Environment Bill [Act])

- there is a need for guidance on what data responsible authorities should ideally be seeking to use to prevent LNRS partnerships spending too long gathering data
- assessing habitat quality was difficult due to a lack of recent data - similarly, trend data for some species and habitat types were hard to ascertain
- presentation of data needs to be accessible enough to empower non-specialists to make informed suggestions about what their priorities are
- data licensing is a significant issue but it is possible to include datasets whilst protecting their commercial value

Collaboration

The pilots took different approaches to collaboration. The main lessons include:

- early engagement of a wide range of people and organisations is crucial to secure genuine engagement - effective collaboration takes time, so it is one of the first things to think about in preparing an LNRS
- there cannot be 'one-size-fits-all' engagement - different stakeholders need to be engaged differently. In particular, land managers' role as stakeholders and key delivery partners must be recognised
- local conveners performed a valuable role in bringing land managers into the LNRS process - aligning LNRSs with future schemes that reward environmental land management would likely require a local convener function
- professional facilitation expertise was brought in in several pilots to support stakeholder engagement workshops and was valuable
- use of stakeholder inputs needs to be transparent so individuals can see their priorities and views reflected
- establishing a common understanding of the purpose of LNRSs and the process with all stakeholder groups is essential to gathering constructive inputs.

Using the products

The end users of the strategies were an important consideration throughout the process:

- the prototypes will appeal to a range of potential end users (including local authorities, Defra group, public bodies, landowners, Local Nature Partnerships, environmental organisations and developers) as they cover a broad set of potential environmental benefits as well as more specific habitats and species requirements
- LNRS products should look to achieve consistency across boundaries to make it easier to use more than one at a time
- certain end users require specific guidance on how to use the LNRS products for their means, such as planners or land managers
- a delivery plan is wanted by stakeholders to set out how to implement the potential measures identified in the LNRS - some pilots are investigating what a delivery plan might entail (Defra, 2021).

4.3 Introduction to the approach taken towards a draft Black Country LNRS

131. The two key elements of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, as laid out in the Environment Act, are:
- A Statement of Biodiversity Priorities.
 - A Local Habitat Map.
132. Most of the work undertaken in the Black Country towards the production of a draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy was undertaken during the period that the five national pilots were running and in lieu of published guidance. The six-step process subsequently published by Defra (outlined in 4.2) has not therefore been followed per se, rather many of the various elements of this have been achieved through a distinct process that seeks to produce similar outcomes.
133. The broad relationship between the process followed in the Black Country and the six-step Defra process is summarised in Table 8.

Table 9: Broad relationship between the process followed in the Black Country and the six-step Defra process

Black Country approach	Defra pilot six-step process
Task 1: Development of a habitat baseline for the Black Country	Step 0: Defra group provides a map of each LNRS area, including habitats and national conservation sites Step 1: locally held data is added to the map, including locally identified wildlife sites
Task 2: Produce a draft Nature Recovery Map for the Black Country	
Task 3a: Produce a draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map	Step 5: mapping of suitable locations for the delivery of the potential measures onto map of existing habitat
Task 3b: Develop draft priority biodiversity actions (Statement of Biodiversity Priorities)	Step 2: description of the LNRS area, including its key habitats and potential opportunities to create or improve them, based on ecological sub-areas
	Step 3: identification of outcomes, achieved through creation or improvement of habitat, and categorisation of those outcomes into priority and other
	Step 4: potential measures for creating or improving habitat to achieve the priority and other outcomes (a statement of biodiversity priorities is produced)
	Step 5: mapping of suitable locations for the delivery of the potential measures onto map of existing habitat

4.4 Task 3a: Draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map

134. The work undertaken for Tasks 1 and 2 enabled the production of a map (Figure 7. Draft Black Country Nature Recovery Network Map) of the ecological network of the Black Country. This identifies a number of components (3.4.1) that depict the variation in relative ecological value across the landscape. The map also outlines where the prioritisation of investment in nature's recovery would provide the most benefit in ecological network terms.
135. Task 3a seeks to utilise and build upon this output to produce a draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map. The purpose of this stage of the draft LNRS process is to further understand and depict the nature of the landscape, whilst undertaking an additional stage of investment prioritisation.

4.4.1 Core Landscapes

136. The first stage of this process was to identify the Black Country's Core Landscapes. Core Landscapes are defined as large areas of land comprised of multiple land use parcels that are ecologically coherent, often sharing similar geology, soil types, habitats, landscape character and land-use history. Core Landscapes typically support the highest abundance and diversity of semi-natural and Priority Habitats. They provide significant opportunity and are a priority for investment in ecological recovery (e.g. habitat restoration and creation).
137. A total of 13 Core Landscapes have been identified and mapped. These cover the entire Black Country green belt as well as major river corridors and aggregations of significant areas of undeveloped land within the most urban parts of the conurbation. The 13 Core Landscapes range in size from 1.8 km² to 12.4 km² and collectively cover an area of 78.3 km² - 22 % of the total Black Country area of 357 km². The Core Landscapes are shown in Figure 8.

4.4.2 Priority Network Restoration Zones

138. The second stage of the process was to identify Priority Network Restoration Zones. These are those parts of the urban Black Country landscape that contain the highest density of Core Habitat and Core Expansion land use parcels, and which collectively link Core Landscapes. The purpose of Priority Network Restoration Zones is to support the creation of a coherent ecological network across the Black Country landscape, and are where investment in nature's recovery outside of Core Landscapes has been prioritised.
139. Collectively the Priority Network Restoration Zones cover an area of 63.2 km², 17.7 % of the total Black Country area of 357 km². The Priority Network Restoration Zones are shown in Figure 8.

4.4.3 The Draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map

140. To produce the Draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map, the Core Landscapes and Priority Network Restoration Zones (Figure. 8) have been overlain on the components of the Nature Recovery Network Map (3.4.1 and Figure. 7). Locations where the Core Landscapes directly link with the Natural England's National Habitat Network in adjoining local authority areas are indicated as National Habitat Network Connections.

The Draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map is shown in Figure 9.

Core Landscapes & Priority Network Restoration Zones - draft April 2021

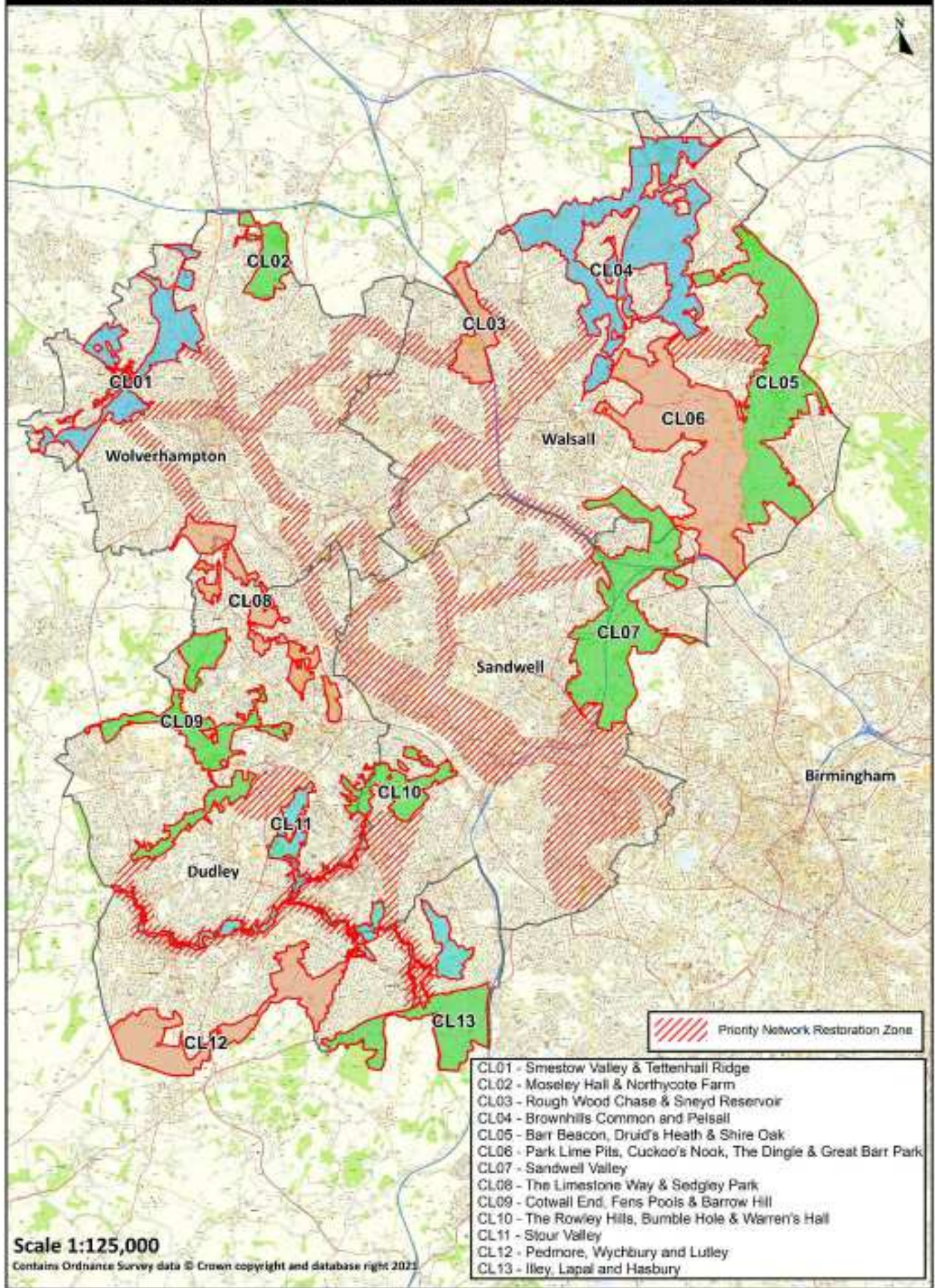


Figure 8. Core Landscapes & Priority Network Restoration Zones

Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map - draft April 2021

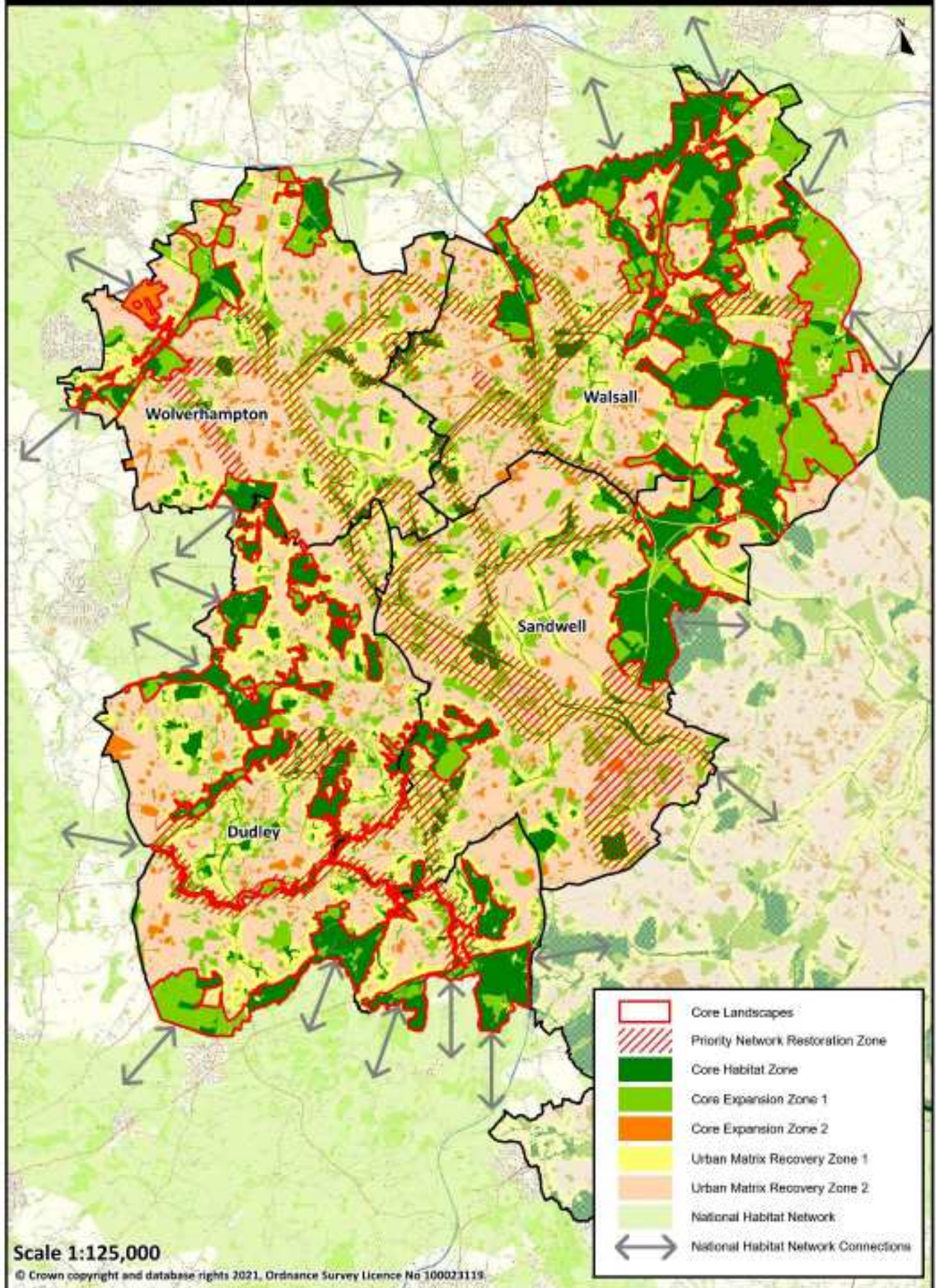


Figure 9. Draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map

4.5 Task 3b: Draft Black Country Priority Biodiversity Actions

141. The guidance provided by Defra to the five Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilots was drawn upon for the formulation of draft priority biodiversity actions for the Black Country.

4.5.1 Statement of Biodiversity Priorities

141. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilots were provided with the following guidance for producing a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities:
- I. An overall description of the strategy area – drawing on existing planning documents.
 - II. A description of ecological sub-areas based on geology, topography and soil type (possibly using National Character Area boundaries), the key habitats and species associated with each sub-area, how their distribution has changed over time and anticipated future changes due to climate change and other known pressures.
 - III. A broad assessment of the opportunity for linking, increasing or improving the condition of each key habitat, taking into account habitat characteristics and practical constraints.
 - IV. A description of the wider environmental issues for which the creation or improvement of habitats could help provide a nature-based solution (e.g. climate and flood mitigation).
 - V. The outcomes – both for nature and the wider natural environment – that the LNRS is seeking to achieve, the identification of which outcomes are considered ‘priority’ and the process by which these outcomes have been identified. Outcomes can be specific (e.g. X pairs of nightingales) or strategic (e.g. sequester carbon by planting native trees).
 - VI. The potential measures by which the creation or improvement of key habitats can deliver both priority and other desired outcomes (e.g. rotational coppicing of native woodland to provide nightingale habitat or ditch-blocking to re-wet degraded peat).

4.5.2 Identification of Ecological Sub-areas in the Black Country

142. The 13 Core Landscapes defined and delineated (4.4.1) in the Black Country comprise the main ecological sub-areas that have so far been identified (see 5, Next Steps). These typically support the highest abundance and diversity of semi-natural and Priority Habitats, and provide significant opportunity - and are a priority - for investment in ecological recovery.

4.5.3 Ecological Sub-area Statement of Biodiversity Priorities

143. A Statement of Biodiversity Priorities has been produced for each of the ecological sub-areas (Core Landscapes). These meet many of the Defra guidance points for producing a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities:
- A description of the ecological sub-area based on geology, topography and soil type.
 - The key habitats and species associated with each sub-area.
 - A broad assessment of the opportunity for linking, increasing or improving the condition of each key habitat.
 - The outcomes that the LNRS is seeking to achieve, the identification of which outcomes are considered ‘priority’, and the process by which these outcomes have been identified.
 - The potential measures by which the creation or improvement of key habitats can deliver both priority and other desired outcomes.

4.5.4 Presentation of Ecological Sub-area Statement of Biodiversity Priorities

144. Each of the 13 ecological sub-area Statements of Biodiversity Priorities (for examples see appendices 1-4) contains the following information:

General Information:

Ecological sub-area name, reference code, the National Character Area (NCA) it lies within, the NCA reference code, local authority area and total area in km².

Ecological Sub-area Description

- I. Overview description
- II. Landuse description
- III. Topography description
- IV. Geology description
- V. A list of any UNESCO Black Country Geopark sites
- VI. Soils description
- VII. An ecological sub-area land use map (see 3.1.1.1).
- VIII. Name, reference code and description of the Historic Landscape Character Areas that cover the ecological sub-area.
- IX. Name, reference code and description of any Historic Environment Area Designations within the ecological sub-area.
- X. Waterbody Catchment information (from the Environment Agency's Catchment Data Explorer):
 - a. River Basin District name
 - b. Management Catchment name
 - c. Waterbody Catchment name
 - d. Overall Classification
 - e. Ecological Classification
 - f. Chemical Classification
- XI. Key Habitats:
 - a. Broad Habitat type name
 - b. Priority Habitat type name (if any)
 - c. Habitat type description
- XII. Key Species:
 - a. Key fauna species recorded since 2000 (birds, amphibians & reptiles, mammals, fish, invertebrates – see appendices notes for details)
 - b. Key flora species (Birmingham and Black Country axiophytes) recorded since 1995
- XIII. Ecological Connectivity:
 - a. A description of ecological sub-area connections to the Local Habitat Network
 - b. A description of ecological sub-area connections to the National Habitat Network
- XIV. An ecological sub-area Components and Connectivity map showing data from the Draft Black Country LNRS Opportunity Map (Figure 9) at an appropriate scale.

Ecological Sub-area Opportunities

- XV. Identification of Focus Habitats with:
 - a. A list of actions designed to improve, enhance or create the Focus Habitat
 - b. A measure of success for each action
- XVI. Identification of Target Species and Species Groups with measures of success.
- XVII. Geodiversity site actions and measures of success.
- XVIII. Connectivity Opportunities:
 - a. Identification of actions to improve Local Habitat Network Connections
 - b. Identification of actions to improve National Habitat Network Connections

Information and Data Sources

- XIX. Information and data sources are referenced.

5. Next Steps

- 145. The work described in this document comprises significant progress towards a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the Black Country.
- 146. This work has, however, been undertaken by the Wildlife Trust and EcoRecord without the benefit of collaboration with additional stakeholders and partners, and in lieu of published guidance from Defra. There remains significant work that needs to be undertaken to progress further towards a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and for this to be ready for adoption by the (yet to be determined) responsible authority.
- 147. Whilst we await the publication of detailed guidance on all aspects of Local Nature Recovery Strategies from Defra, there are a number of important next steps that can be undertaken locally:
 - Undertaking consultation with stakeholders, partners and partnerships on the work carried out to date.
 - Forming a partnership of organisations that will work in collaboration with the responsible authority on the next stages and ongoing development and management of the LNRS.
 - Producing Statements of Biodiversity Priorities for the defined Black Country Priority Network Restoration Zones.
 - Defining ecological sub-areas and producing Statements of Biodiversity Priorities for the urban Black Country outside the Core Areas and Priority Network Restoration Zones.
 - Undertaking an ecosystem services assessment of the Black Country landscape, understanding the value of the services provided by existing habitats, and identifying deficits in the network and actions to address these.
 - Identifying and prescribing generic green infrastructure investment opportunities that will have the most impact in terms of addressing ecosystem services deficits.

Glossary of terms

Ancient Woodland – defined by Natural England as land that has had a continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD and may be ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW), which retains a native tree and shrub cover that has not been planted, although it may have been managed by coppicing or felling and allowed to regenerate naturally, or plantation on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) where the original tree cover has been felled and replaced by planting, often with conifers, and usually over the last century

Axiophyte - Axiophytes are indicators of habitat that is considered important for conservation, such as ancient woodlands, clear water and species-rich meadows. The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) has attempted to define axiophytes as follows:

- Species 90% restricted to habitats of nature conservation importance
- Species recorded in fewer than 25% of tetrads in a vice-county
- Very rare species should be considered for omission as chance occurrences

See <http://bsbi.org/axiophytes> for more information.

Bird of Conservation Concern (BoCC4): The list is produced by the UK's leading conservation organisations who worked together to review the status of birds in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man. Criteria is used to assess the historical decline, trends in population and range, population size, localisation and international importance of each species as well as their global and European threat status; and uses up-to-date information on the status of birds in the UK and elsewhere in their ranges, drawing on data collated through the UK's bird monitoring schemes. Species are placed on the Green, Amber or Red list – indicating an increasing level of conservation concern (Red being those of highest concern).

Farmland Birds - Bird indicators based on population trends of wild birds are part of the government's suite of biodiversity indicators and show how the fortunes of birds of farmland, woodland, waterways and wetlands, and marine and coastal areas have fared between 1970 and 2017. Farmland birds are used as an indicator of the general quality of the farmed environment because birds sit near the top of the food chain and trends have been well monitored by the British Trust for Ornithology since 1967. The latest updates in the UK and England were published on 8 November 2018.

Habitat of Principal Importance - The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act came into force on 1st Oct 2006. Section 41 (S41) of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. Fifty-six habitats of principal importance are included on the S41 list. These are all the habitats in England that were identified as requiring action in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) and continue to be regarded as conservation priorities in the subsequent UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework. They include terrestrial habitats such as upland hay meadows to lowland mixed deciduous woodland, and freshwater and marine habitats such as ponds and subtidal sands and gravels.

Land Parcel – In this evaluation this refers to individual units of land i.e. individual fields (often defined by OS Mastermap polygons) which were later merged with adjacent land parcels with the same land use type to form larger Landscape Units.

Landscape Unit – In this evaluation these were created by merging adjoining similar Land Parcels to form larger units of the same land use type. It was these units that formed the main basis of the evaluation.

Nature Improvement Area (NIA) - Nature Improvement Areas (NIA) were established to create joined up and resilient ecological networks at a landscape scale. They are run by partnerships of local authorities, local communities and landowners, the private sector and conservation organisations with funding provided by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Natural England. The 12 winning NIA projects were chosen after a competitive process announced in the Natural Environment White Paper.

Nature Recovery Network - A Nature Recovery Network is a joined-up system of places important for wild plants and animals, on land and at sea. It allows plants, animals, seeds, nutrients and water to move from place to place and enables the natural world to adapt to change. It provides plants and animals with places to live, feed and breed. It creates the corridors and areas of habitat they need to move in response to climate change (The Wildlife Trusts, 2018).

Special Area of Conservation (SAC) - This is an area containing habitat types and/or species, which are rare or threatened within a European context. These areas are designated under the European Directive commonly known as the 'Habitats' Directive.

Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) - Non-statutory designation for sites of Birmingham and the Black Country importance, identified by the Local Sites Partnership.

Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC) - Non-statutory designation for sites of Borough importance, identified by the Local Sites Partnership.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - Statutory designation relating to sites of interest for their flora, fauna, geological, or physiographical features, notified by Natural England.

TWINSpan - Two Way Indicator Species Analysis is a method for hierarchical divisive classification of communities, based on progressive refinement of a single ordination axis obtained by Correspondence Analysis (CA) or Detrended Correspondence Analysis (DCA) of a (sites × species) data matrix.

Wood-pasture & Parkland - described in Joint Nature Conservation Committee's (JNCC) UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitat pages as: areas that have been managed by a long established tradition of grazing allowing, where the site is in good condition, the survival of multiple generations of trees, characteristically with at least some veteran trees or shrubs. The tree and shrub component may have been exploited in the past and can occur as scattered individuals, small groups, or as more or less complete canopy cover. Other semi-natural habitats, including grassland, heathland, scrub etc, may occur in mosaic beneath the trees. While oak, beech, alder, birch, ash, hawthorn, hazel or pine are often the dominant tree species, a wide range of other tree and shrub species may occur as part of wood pasture systems.

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**Appendices 1 - 4: Example Ecological Sub-area Statements of Biodiversity
Priorities**

Ecological Sub-area Statement of Biodiversity Priorities – Technical Appendix

Sub-area name	Smestow Valley & Tettenhall Ridge	Sub-area ref.	CL01
Natural Character Area	Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau	NCA ref.	66
Local Authority Area	Wolverhampton	Area km²	4.97

Ecological Sub-area Description

Overview

The ecological sub-area comprises a connected network of open spaces in the north-west of Wolverhampton, close to the Black Country's boundary with rural Staffordshire. With the exception of a number of direct connections to Staffordshire via watercourses and canals, suburban settlement surrounds the ecological sub-area including the historic villages of Tettenhall, Tettenhall Wood and Compton (formerly in the Staffordshire parishes of Tettenhall and Bushbury). The ecological sub-area is dominated by open spaces that follow the valley of the Smestow Brook and the canal network of western Wolverhampton, along with the mature woodlands and historic greens of the sandstone Tettenhall Ridge.

Land Use

The valley of the Smestow Brook is dominated by Smestow Valley Local Nature Reserve (LNR) which follows the former Wolverhampton & Kingswinford Railway line for 4.5 kilometres from Aldersley in the north to Wightwick in the south. Covering an area of approximately 51 hectares, the site comprises the dismantled railway line and a number of areas of former farmland with retained field-boundary hedgerows, grassland and recent secondary and plantation woodland. The Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal follows the valley and forms the boundary to the LNR for much of its length. There are also short lengths of the Birmingham Main Line and Shropshire Union canals. Other areas of open space in the valley include public open space, playing fields, sports grounds, a golf course, a racecourse and a sewage treatment works. The only agricultural land lies in the very south of the ecological sub-area on the boundary with the South Staffordshire countryside and comprises pastures to the north and south of the Smestow Brook.

The south-east facing slopes of Tettenhall Ridge are occupied by mature broad-leaved woodland, parts of which are designated as ancient, whereas others were planted in the 19th century. Tettenhall Upper Green occupies land to the north of Tettenhall village and comprises public open space, with to the north of this Danescourt Cemetery and South Staffordshire Golf Course.

Topography

The Smestow valley lies at an elevation of 100 m in the north, falling away to 90 m in the south, with the surrounding level land at an elevation of 110 to 120 m. The Tettenhall Ridge runs on a north-east – south-west axis with a south-east aspect and is approximately 30 to 40 metres in height, with the villages of Tettenhall and Tettenhall Wood lying to the west at an elevation of 140 – 150 metres.

Geology

The entire ecological sub-area is located on bedrock of sedimentary sandstone and conglomerate, interbedded, formed approximately 200 to 251 million years ago in the Triassic Period. This is partially overlain with superficial deposits of diamicton till formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period; undifferentiated river terrace deposits of sand and gravel formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period; and in the valley of the Smestow brook, clay, silt and sand alluvium formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period.

Geopark Sites

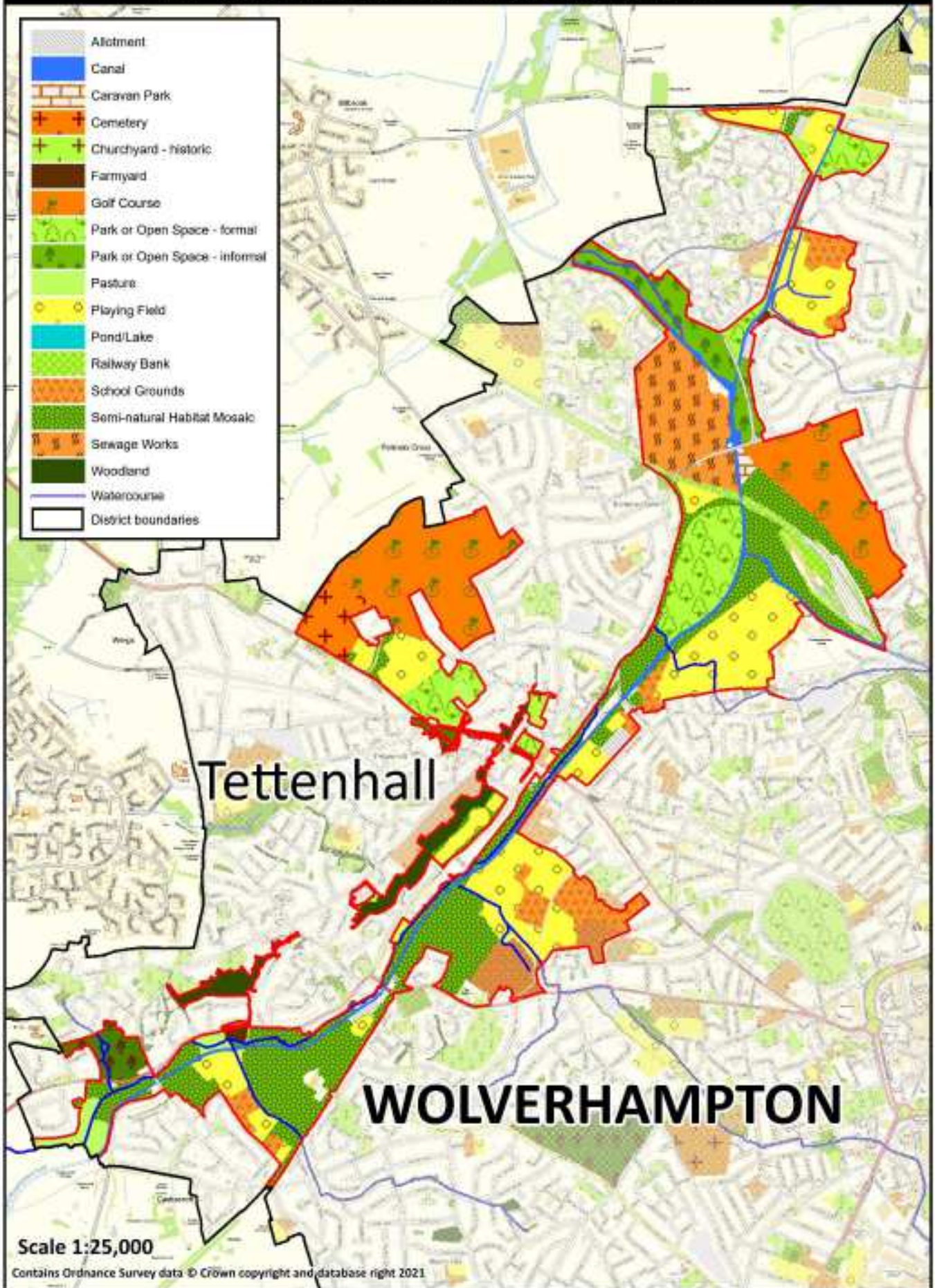
- Compton and Tettenhall Ridge (GR SJ88900013)
- Wightwick Wedge and Smestow Valley Local Nature reserve (GR SO887994)

Soils

The valley of the Smestow Brook is dominated by naturally wet very acid sandy and loamy soils, whilst in the north there are areas of slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils, loamy soils

with naturally high groundwater, and freely draining slightly acid loamy soils. The Tettenhall Ridge is comprised of slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage, and freely draining slightly acid loamy soils.

CL01 - Smestow Valley & Tettenhall Ridge - Land Use



Historic Landscape Character Areas			
Reference	WV02	Name	Wolverhampton Outer Western Suburbs
<p>The ecological sub-area is dominated by WV02 Wolverhampton Outer Western Suburbs, which is predominately comprised of 20th century residential development. The Character Area contains the site of the medieval settlements of Tettenhall (first mentioned AD 910), Wightwick, Compton, Wergs and Aldersley. During the medieval period these settlements were likely to have been surrounded by open fields. The settlement of Tettenhall was fairly large, centred around two large greens. The heathland that existed at Tettenhall Wood until the early 19th century had probably been there since the medieval period. Once the heath was enclosed the development of houses soon took over.</p>			
Reference	WV10	Name	Pendeford, Fordhouses & Moseley
<p>The northern part of the ecological sub-area lies within WV10 Pendeford, Fordhouses & Moseley. The modern landscape is characterised by late 20th century residential development, industrial sites, public services and recreational facilities (public parks and nature reserves), which also date to the period after 1938. Prior to the 19th century, this area was mainly agricultural with some fields being medieval in origin and with some early settlements located in the west of the Character Area at Pendeford Farm, Pendeford Hall and Barnhurst Farm. Pendeford Aerodrome was opened in 1938 and later became a 1980s housing estate. The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal is one of the earliest features in this landscape, constructed in 1770.</p>			

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]			
Reference	APA 28	Name	Land adjacent to Smestow Brook
<p>The APA contains part of the route of the Smestow Brook, there is considered to be potential for previously unknown prehistoric activity (including Bronze Age burnt mounds) and environmental evidence present associated with the former water course.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 22	Name	Upper Green Tettenhall
<p>The AHHLV contains Upper Green, an area of surviving common ground associated with the settlement at Tettenhall. Contains an old millpond (now a paddling pool) and a 20th C clock tower. Possible shallow ridge and furrow earthworks to the N of the pool.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 24	Name	Wightwick Wedge and Smestow Valley
<p>The AHHLV contains an area of earthwork ridge and furrow, the remains of a medieval holloway and Wightwick Mill. It is situated within the Smestow Valley which is a major geomorphological feature of the Black Country on its western margin.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 59	Name	Tettenhall Wood
<p>The AHHLV is an area of semi-natural ancient woodland. It has the potential to contain well preserved archaeological remains and features associated with medieval and post-medieval woodland management.</p>			
Reference	APA 83	Name	Graveyard of St Michael's and All Angels Church
<p>The APA contains the late 19th century extent of the grave yard associated with the Grade II listed St Michael's and All Angels Church. It has the potential to contain burials and mortuary monuments dating back to the medieval period.</p>			
Reference	AHHTV 129	Name	Mount Street, Tettenhall
<p>The AHHTV contains the south side of Mount Street, Tettenhall. The settlement at Tettenhall Wood expanded along Mount Street during the 19th century and the AHHTV contains a range of 19th century buildings associated with this expansion.</p>			
Reference	APA 82	Name	Tettenhall Historic Settlement
<p>The APA covers the historic core of Tettenhall as shown on the 1816 Ordnance Surveyors Drawings.</p>			

Waterbody Catchments			
River Basin District	Severn	Management Catchment	Severn Middle Worcestershire
Waterbody Catchment	Overall Classification	Ecological	Chemical
Smestow Brook - source to conf Wom-Penn Brook	Moderate (2021)	Moderate (2021)	Fail (2021)
River Basin District	Humber	Management Catchment	Trent Valley Staffordshire
Waterbody Catchment	Overall Classification	Ecological	Chemical
Penk from Source to Saredon Brook	Poor (2019)	Poor (2019)	Fail (2019)

Key Habitats [2]			
Broad Habitat Type	Boundary & Linear Features	Priority Habitat	Hedgerows
Remnant field boundary hedgerows exist in many of the areas of open space and, less frequently, along roadsides. These are typically Hawthorn-dominated with varying diversity of woody component and field-layer, with some containing mature standards of species including Pedunculate Oak.			
Broad Habitat Type	Standing Open Water and Canals	Priority Habitat	Eutrophic Standing Waters
The Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal runs north-south through the entire ecological sub-area, following the valley of the Smestow Brook for much of its length and linking directly with the Staffordshire countryside at each end. Towards the north of the sub-area are junctions with the Shropshire Union and Birmingham Mainline Canal, the former running west and into the Staffordshire countryside, the latter west into the urban Black Country and on to Birmingham city centre. The canals comprise a significant network of wildlife corridors and are an important component of the ecological network. A variety of habitat types and a number of species of note including Otter and Water Vole are present.			
Broad Habitat Type	Standing Open Water and Canals	Priority Habitat	Ponds
In the north of the ecological sub-area within the track of Dunstall Racecourse is a large artificial flood alleviation pond (c. 1.4 ha) associated with the Smestow Brook. This is steep sided and supports little aquatic flora but is well-recorded and notable for a broad-range of passage migrant water and wetland birds. In the south of Smestow Valley LNR there is a former field pond and nearby a recently created pond that support a breeding population of Great Crested Newt.			
Broad Habitat Type	Rivers and Streams	Priority Habitat	Rivers
The Pendeford Brook and a tributary of this rise within the north of the ecological sub-area but are entirely within culvert. The Smestow Brook rises to the east of the ecological sub-area but lies within a > 4 kilometre culvert from which it emerges at a notable aqueduct over the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal to the south of the racecourse. From here the watercourse flows south within a highly modified channel for several hundred metres, from which point the channel is more natural, though still modified and over-widened. There are two small tributaries of the Smestow Brook: the Graisle Brook which is culverted for its entire length with the exception of a short section (c. 240m) of artificial channel that flows alongside and the canal, and the Finchfield Brook, which emerges from a culvert into a mostly unmodified channel for approximately 450 m before again entering a culvert.			
Broad Habitat Type	Neutral Grassland	Priority Habitat	

Periodically cut rank neutral grassland dominates much of the Smestow valley. Species diversification and the implementation of annual management has been undertaken within areas of the LNR, however, to date this has had only limited success in increasing floral diversity.

In the very south of the ecological sub-area there are areas of rank neutral grassland to the north and south of the Smestow Brook which are occasionally grazed.

There are numerous areas of regularly mown amenity grassland throughout, including areas of public open space, golf courses, Dunstall Racecourse, school grounds, sports fields and at the National Trust's Wightwick Manor site in the south of the ecological sub-area.

Broad Habitat Type	Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Priority Habitat	
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There are numerous blocks of planted trees within the valley of the Smestow Brook and in areas of open space adjoining the canal corridors. These are predominantly comprised of native broadleaved species and date to the latter part of the 20th century. Most of the blocks are typically structurally poor and support a field-layer flora comprised of ubiquitous species, however, in recent years a number of projects have been undertaken to enhance these areas and both these structural and species diversity is increasing.

Recent secondary woodland has colonised a number of formerly developed sites including the 4.5 km length of the dismantled Wolverhampton & Kingswinford Railway line, a former tennis court close to the Tettenhall Road and former railway sidings at Oxley in the north of the ecological sub-area.

There are a number of mature plantation woodlands associated with large 18th and 19th century houses along the Tettenhall Ridge including at the National Trust's Wightwick Manor site in the south of the ecological sub-area. These are typically dominated by UK-native species including Beech and Pedunculate Oak.

Broad Habitat Type	Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Priority Habitat	Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland
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The south-east facing scarp slope of the Tettenhall Ridge is dominated by mature woodland and is a significant feature of the local landscape. Woodland is depicted in this area on maps dating back to 1613 and most of this is recorded on Natural England's ancient woodland inventory as ancient semi-natural woodland. There is a significant planted component to the woodlands and an abundance of introduced ornamental plants, however, and the true extent of ancient semi-natural woodland is not clear.

Key Species [3]

Bird indicators

Farmland	Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Jackdaw, Kestrel, Linnet, Rook, Starling, Stock Dove, Whitethroat, Woodpigeon
Woodland	Blackbird, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Common Chaffinch, Dunnock, Eurasian Blackcap, Eurasian Blue Tit, Eurasian Bullfinch, Eurasian Nuthatch, Eurasian Wren, European Green Woodpecker, Goldcrest, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Jay, Long-tailed Tit, Robin, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Tawny Owl, Treecreeper, Willow Warbler.
Water & Wetland	Eurasian Coot, Grey Heron, Grey Wagtail, Kingfisher, Little Grebe, Mallard, Moorhen, Mute Swan.
Other	Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Collared Dove, Common House Martin, Eurasian Magpie, House Sparrow, Mistle Thrush, Northern Raven, Swift.

Amphibians & Reptiles

Amphibians	Common Frog, Common Toad, Great Crested Newt, Smooth Newt.
Reptiles	none

Mammals

Bats	Brown Long-eared Bat, Common Pipistrelle, Daubenton's Bat, Lesser Horseshoe Bat, Lesser Noctule, Natterer's Bat, Noctule Bat, Soprano Pipistrelle, Whiskered Bat.
Other	Eurasian Badger, European Otter, European Water Vole, West European Hedgehog.

Fish	
Bony Fish	none
Jawless Fish	none
Invertebrates	
Butterflies	
Moths	
Other Invertebrates	
Flora (axiophytes)	
Woodland	<i>Adoxa moschatellina, Ajuga reptans, Allium ursinum, Anemone nemorosa, Angelica sylvestris, Athyrium filix-femina, Blechnum spicant, Brachypodium sylvaticum, Bromopsis ramosa, Caltha palustris, Carex remota, Carex sylvatica, Chaerophyllum temulum, Chrysosplenium oppositifolium, Deschampsia flexuosa, Dioscorea communis, Epipactis helleborine, Festuca gigantea, Filipendula ulmaria, Fragaria vesca, Frangula alnus, Galium odoratum, Geum rivale, Lysimachia nemorum, Lysimachia vulgaris, Malus sylvestris, Melica uniflora, Mercurialis perennis, Milium effusum, Moehringia trinervia, Oxalis acetosella, Poa nemoralis, Quercus petraea, Solidago virgaurea, Stellaria holostea, Teucrium scorodonia, Tilia cordata, Torilis japonica, Valeriana officinalis, Veronica montana, Viola reichenbachiana.</i>
Grassland	<i>Agrostis canina, Ajuga reptans, Alchemilla filicaulis subsp. vestita, Blechnum spicant, Brachypodium sylvaticum, Bromopsis erecta, Caltha palustris, Dactylorhiza praetermissa, Daucus carota subsp. carota, Deschampsia flexuosa, Filipendula ulmaria, Fragaria vesca, Geum rivale, Lathyrus nissolia, Leontodon hispidus, Lotus pedunculatus, Odontites vernus, Persicaria bistorta, Potentilla sterilis, Rhinanthus minor, Sanguisorba officinalis, Silene flos-cuculi, Solidago virgaurea, Stachys officinalis, Stellaria holostea.</i>
Heathland	<i>Agrostis canina, Aira praecox, Blechnum spicant, Carex nigra, Deschampsia flexuosa, Teucrium scorodonia.</i>
Mires	<i>Agrostis canina, Alchemilla filicaulis subsp. vestita, Angelica sylvestris, Athyrium filix-femina, Caltha palustris, Carex acutiformis, Carex nigra, Carex riparia, Dactylorhiza praetermissa, Filipendula ulmaria, Galium palustre, Geum rivale, Glyceria declinata, Hypericum tetrapterum, Juncus acutiflorus, Lotus pedunculatus, Lysimachia vulgaris, Menyanthes trifoliata, Potentilla palustris, Pulicaria dysenterica, Ranunculus aquatilis, Ranunculus flammula, Silene flos-cuculi, Sparganium emersum, Stachys palustris, Valeriana officinalis, Veronica beccabunga, Veronica scutellata.</i>
Open Water	<i>Butomus umbellatus, Carex acutiformis, Carex riparia, Galium palustre, Menyanthes trifoliata, Potamogeton perfoliatus, Ranunculus aquatilis, Sagittaria sagittifolia, Schoenoplectus lacustris, Veronica catenata, Veronica scutellata.</i>
Post-industrial (water-stressed)	<i>Aira praecox, Anthyllis vulneraria, Arenaria serpyllifolia, Blechnum spicant, Clematis vitalba, Daucus carota subsp. carota, Deschampsia flexuosa, Erigeron acris, Fragaria vesca, Reseda lutea, Silene vulgaris, Trifolium arvense, Vicia tetrasperma.</i>
Cultivation	<i>Vicia tetrasperma.</i>

Ecological Connectivity

Local Habitat Network

There are no direct links to other ecological sub-areas. The main ecological links to the rest of the Black Country landscape are via identified Priority Network Restoration Zones. Most significant of these is from the junction of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal with the Birmingham Main Line canal which links Smestow Valley & Tettenhall Ridge to the rest of the Black Country's canal network.

Further indirect 'stepping-stone' Priority Network Restoration Zones have been mapped which, via areas of green space (including mature parks) and mature gardens, link the ecological sub-area to other parts of the canal network and to Core Landscape 09 Sedgley Park, Sedgley Escarpment & The Limestone Way.

Ecological Connectivity

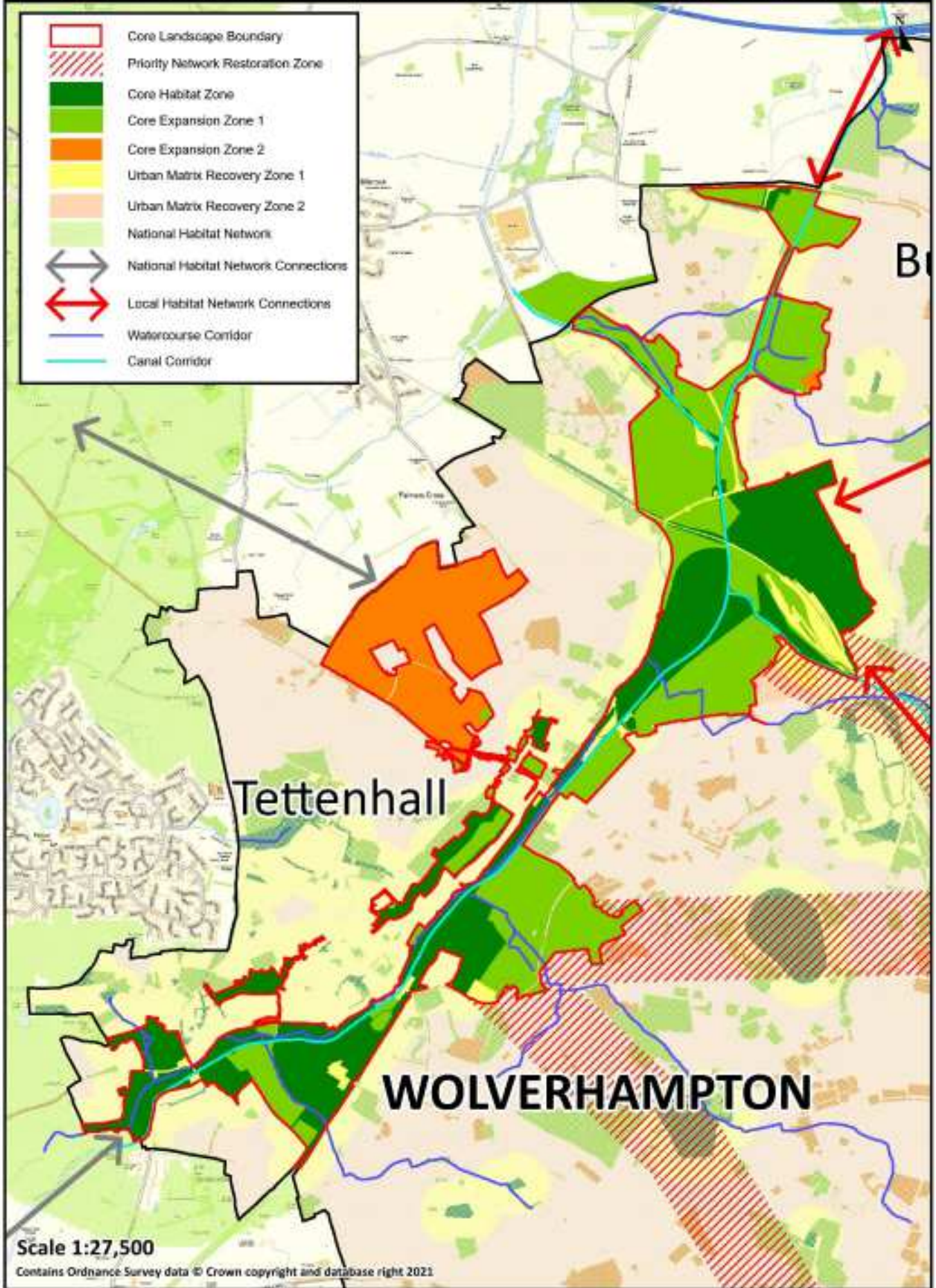
National Habitat Network

Smestow Valley & Tettenhall Ridge links directly to the national habitat network in rural South Staffordshire via the Smestow Brook and canal corridors at the south of the ecological sub-area.

There are indirect connections to the national habitat network in South Staffordshire via South Staffordshire Golf Course, a distance of approximately 1 km.

Further ecological connections to rural South Staffordshire via the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal and the Shropshire Union Canal corridors in the north of the ecological sub-area.

CL01 - Smestow Valley & Tettenhall Ridge - Components & Connectivity



Ecological Sub-area Opportunities

Focus Habitats		
Habitat	Action	Measure
Hedgerows	Improve management of existing	Habitat in good condition
	Restore through gapping up	Habitat in good condition
	Establish hedgerow trees	Habitat structure improved
Ponds	Restore existing	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Rivers	Restore hydromorphology (naturalise modified channels)	Improved ecological status
	Reduce artificial inputs	Improved chemical status
Eutrophic Standing Waters	Enhance marginal and emergent vegetation	Increased floral diversity and habitat structure improved
Neutral Grassland	Enhance existing neutral grasslands	Increased floral diversity
	Create new species-rich neutral grasslands	Increased floral diversity and habitat structure improved
Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland	Coppice	Habitat structure improved
	Create woodland edge	Habitat structure improved
	Diversify woody component	Habitat structure improved
	Diversify field-layer component of plantations	Increased floral diversity
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites

Target Species	
Species/Species Group	Measure
Atlantic Salmon	Confirmed recent records
Bats	Increased abundance of confirmed species
Breeding farmland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Breeding water & wetland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Breeding woodland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Brown/Sea Trout	Confirmed recent records
European Otter	Increased signs, confirmed breeding population
European Water Vole	Increased population
Great Crested Newt	Increased abundance and number of breeding ponds
Hedgehog	Confirmed recent records

Geodiversity		
Site	Action	Measure
n/a		

Connectivity Opportunities	
Local Habitat Network	
Connection	Action
Within Core Landscape CL01	Restoration of modified channel of the Smestow Brook and tributaries.
	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation at sites including areas of public open space, golf courses, school grounds and sports fields.
	Plantation woodland enhancement.
	Creation of new ponds.
	Field boundary hedgerow restoration and creation.
	Planting of standard trees in parks, green spaces and school grounds.
National Habitat Network	
Connection	Action
Priority Network Restoration Zone (Birmingham Main Line Canal)	Increased marginal vegetation through the installation of coir rolls along hard banks.
	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation on undeveloped land including parks, green spaces, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Woodland enhancement and small-scale planting.
	Planting of standard trees (including fruit trees) along canal corridor.

Information and Data Sources		
	Source	Date
Landuse	Ecological Evaluation of Birmingham and Black Country GIS data set, EcoRecord.	2021
Topography	OS Terrain 50 GIS data set, Ordnance Survey.	2017
Geology	British Geological Society 1:625,000 bedrock & superficial GIS web map services from BGS website: http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html	2021
	Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark sites names and location information https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/bcg/	2021
Soils	Soilscapes, Cranfield Soil & Agricultural Institute website: http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/	2021
Species and Habitats	EcoRecord species and habitat databases.	2021
Ecological Connectivity	EcoRecord, The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country (2021) <i>Draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map</i>	2021
	EcoRecord et al. (2021) <i>Midlands Heathland Heartland Lowland Heathland Nature Recovery Opportunity Mapping</i> .	2021
Historic Landscape Character Areas	Wolverhampton City Council (2010) <i>Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation</i> [data-set]. York: Archaeology Data Service [distributor] https://doi.org/10.5284/1000030	2010
Historic Environment Area Designations	Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study, Oxford Archaeology.	2019

[1] HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AREA DESIGNATIONS

The Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study has divided the Historic Environment Area Designations into four categories:

Archaeological Priority Areas (APA): sites with a high potential for archaeological remains of regional or national significance that have not been considered for designation as scheduled monuments, or where there is insufficient data available about the state or preservation of any remains to justify a designation. APAs are likely to have high archaeological and historic interest.

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Designed Landscapes of High Historic Value (DLHHV): landscape areas that make an important contribution to local historic character but do not meet the criteria for inclusion on the national Register for Parks and Gardens. The significance of these areas is likely to arise from their historic, artistic and architectural interests, although such areas may also contain remains of archaeological interest.

Areas of High Historic Landscape Value (AHHLV): these recognise the quality of the wider landscape and their relative values. The significance of these areas arises from the natural and historic features contained within them (e.g. woodland, watercourses, hedgerows, and archaeological features). The significance of these areas is likely to be derived from their archaeological and historic interests.

[2] KEY HABITATS follows the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Broad & Priority Habitat definitions

This is a UK-habitat classification prepared by the UK Biodiversity Group that classifies all terrestrial and freshwater habitats in the UK into 37 broad habitat types. UK BAP Priority Habitats are a range of semi-natural habitat types that were identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action. The original Priority Habitat list was created between 1995 and 1999 and revised in 2007. The list of Priority Habitats has been used to help draw up statutory lists of habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The suite of habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity (formerly Priority Habitats) nest into the defined Broad Habitat Types.

[3] KEY SPECIES

Bird Indicators: Species listed under UK Biodiversity Indicator C5, Birds of the wider countryside and at sea (JNCC). The indicator shows changes in the breeding population sizes of common native birds of farmland and woodland and of freshwater and marine habitats in the UK.

Amphibians & Reptiles: All amphibian and reptile species native to the UK are included.

Mammals: Those protected by UK or EU law, included on the current list of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006 or amended), and those included on the latest B&BC LBAP list of Priority Habitats/Species.

Fish: Those protected by UK or EU law, included on the current list of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006 or amended), and those included on the latest B&BC LBAP list of Priority Habitats/Species.

Invertebrates: Pantheon Assemblage Types Analysis.

Flora (axiophytes): Those included on the Birmingham & the Black Country list of axiophytes (administered by EcoRecord) by four locally defined habitat types.

Ecological Sub-area Statement of Biodiversity Priorities – Technical Appendix

Sub-area ref.	CL05	Sub-area name	Barr Beacon, Druid's Heath and Shire Oak
NCA ref.	67	Natural Character Area	Cannock Chase & Cank Wood
Area km²	10.79	Local Authority Area	Walsall

Ecological Sub-area Description

Overview

Barr Beacon, Druid's Heath and Shire Oak comprises the rural eastern part of both the borough of Walsall and of the Black Country, with Staffordshire to the north and east, the Black Country Settlements of Brownhills, Walsall Wood and Aldridge to the north-west, rural parts of Great Barr to the south-west and the modern settlements of Pheasey and Streetly to the south and south-east. Sutton Park (Birmingham) lies approximately 1 km to the south-east beyond Streetly.

Historically parts of the parishes of Shenstone and Aldridge (including the township of Great Barr), the landscape is dominated by rectilinear fields and some plantation woodlands that were enclosed from commons and open fields through Parliamentary Acts in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Close to historic settlements there are earlier piecemeal and irregular enclosed fields.

Land Use

Predominantly arable agricultural with areas of pasture and dispersed farms. There are smaller areas of woodland and semi-natural mosaic habitat. There are a number of disused sand quarries including those at what are now Shire Oak Park Local Nature Reserve and Pinfold Lane Quarry Local Nature Reserve. Barr Beacon Local Nature Reserve is in the south of the sub-area comprising acid grassland, scrub, plantation woodland and recently created dry heathland. Druid's Heath Golf Course and Streetly Crematorium are also within the sub-area.

Topography

In the south of the sub-area Barr Beacon is the highest point in Walsall at 236 metres. From here the land falls away and levels out to the north and east to 130 metres, before rising again to 180 m at Shire Oak Park.

Geology

Dominated by Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) Sandstone and Conglomerate, Interbedded sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 200 to 251 million years ago in the Triassic Period. In the north-west of the sub-area are Warwickshire Group Siltstone and Sandstone with Subordinate Mudstone. These sedimentary bedrocks formed approximately 271 to 312 million years ago in the Permian and Carboniferous Periods.

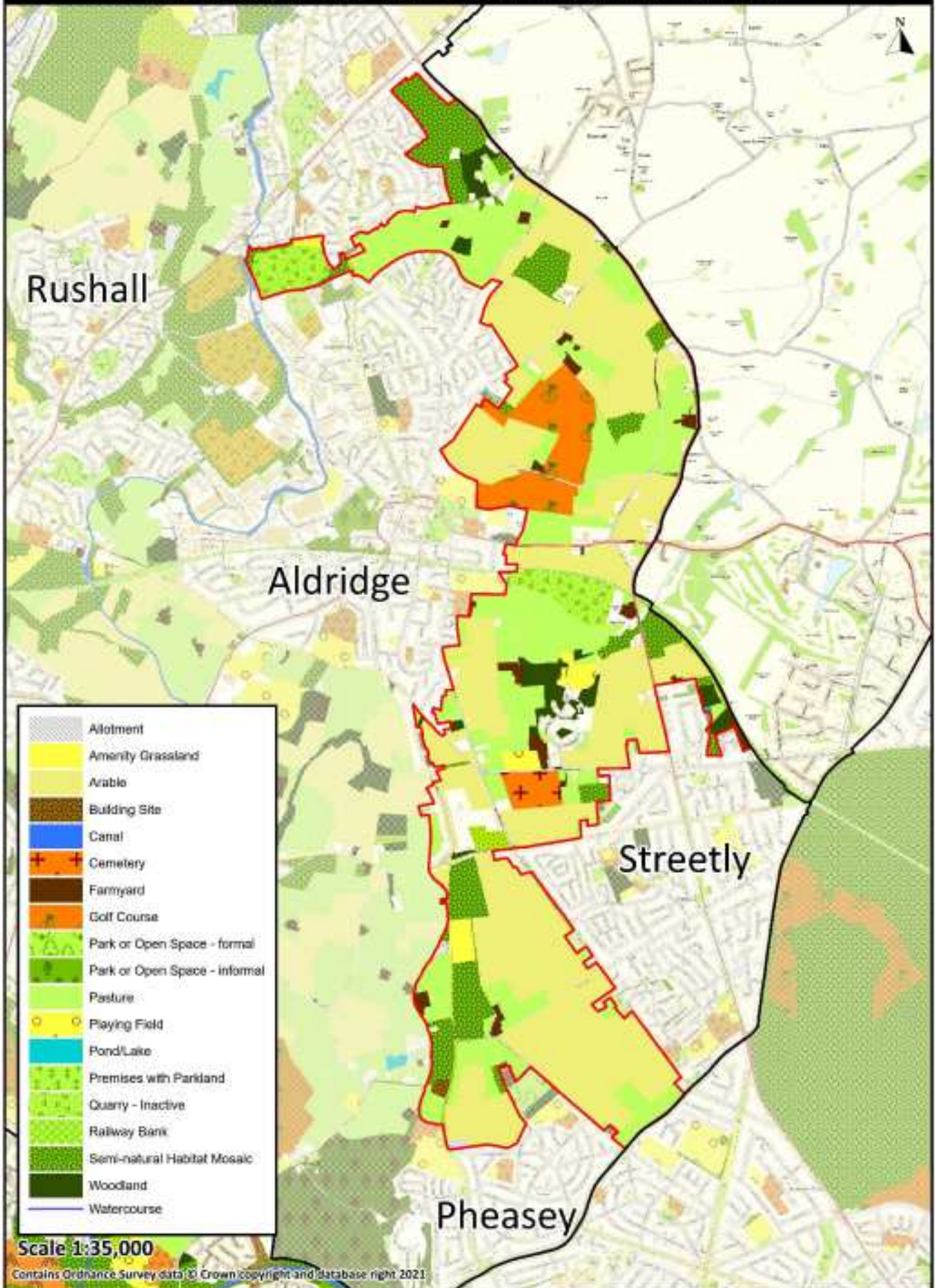
Geopark Sites

- Shire Oak Quarry Local Nature Reserve (GR SK060037)
- Barr Beacon Local Nature Reserve and Pinfold Lane Quarry (GR SP06099723)

Soils

The ecological sub-area is dominated by freely draining slightly acid sandy soils, whilst in the south-west is an area of freely draining very acid sandy and loamy soils. There are also small areas of freely draining slightly acid loamy soils, slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage, and in the east around the Fotherley Brook loamy and sandy soils with naturally high groundwater and a peaty surface.

CL05 - Barr Beacon, Druid's Heath and Shire Oak - Land Use



Historic Landscape Character Areas			
Reference	WL09	Name	Barr Beacon & Aldridge Fields
<p>The ecological sub-area is dominated by the eastern part of WL09 Barr Beacon & Aldridge Fields. This Character Area is situated in the east of the borough and is the most rural landscape in Walsall, with field systems covering 66% of its area. It has a mixed geology situated on mudstone and limestone in the west, sandstone, mudstone and conglomerate in the in the centre and sandstone in the east. Rushall Hall in the west lies on coal measures. The modern character of the area is defined largely by agricultural land and dispersed farms. The area also includes modern recreational land (golf courses), woodland, two areas of settlement, and an area of surviving ancient heathland (Barr Beacon).</p> <p>Historically the Character Area was in use as medieval open fields associated with Walsall, Aldridge, Rushall, Stonnal and Great Barr. In the centre of the Character Area there were several medieval moated sites and many of the trackways and roads in this area are likely to be medieval in origin. The earliest settlements in the area are Great Barr, which was mentioned in a charter of AD 957, and Rushall, which was recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086. The surviving field systems in the Character Area were enclosed by either piecemeal enclosure in the late medieval/ early post-medieval periods from open field or were enclosed out of Aldridge Heath by Parliamentary Act.</p>			

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]			
Reference	AHHLV 19	Name	Shire Oak Quarry
<p>A large former sand and gravel extraction site which started as a marl pit in the early 19th century.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 15	Name	Kings Hayes Historic Field System
<p>A well-preserved historic field system, which contains evidence of medieval strip fields and a mixture of cropmark and earthwork ridge and furrow.</p>			
Reference	APA 5	Name	Castlefort
<p>A scheduled Iron Age hillfort called Castlefort (NHLE ref: 1017244). The scheduled hillfort covers a 1.5ha area and is set in a naturally defensible position.</p>			
Reference	APA 19	Name	Earthwork Mound at Aldridge
<p>A small Tumulus, possibly the remains of a Bronze Age Barrow or a Windmill mound.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 3	Name	Bourne Vale
<p>Was part of the open fields associated with Aldridge during the medieval period. It has a high potential to contain prehistoric remains and contains an area of ancient woodland, eroded ridge and furrow.</p>			
Reference	APA 3	Name	Bourne Pool Area
<p>Contains a range of archaeological remains including the site of a medieval iron mill and pool, a 15th-century charcoal burning site, a possible burnt mound and a Mesolithic - Neolithic flint scatter.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 11	Name	Great Barr Beacon
<p>Contains an isolated north-south ridge of Bunter Pebble Beds and is the possible site of an Anglo-Saxon beacon. A number of prehistoric and Roman finds have been recorded within the area and the AHHLV contains the proposed location of an Iron Age Hillfort although no evidence of the hillfort has been discovered here.</p>			
Reference	AHHTV 1	Name	Scattered Settlement at Over End
<p>Comprises the remains of a dispersed linear settlement formed from a cluster of buildings probably built in the 18th century.</p>			

Waterbody Catchments			
River Basin District	Humber	Management Catchment	Tame, Anker and Mease
Waterbody Catchment	Overall Classification	Ecological	Chemical
Crane Brook - source to Fotherley Brook	Poor (2019)	Poor (2019)	Fail (2019)
Fotherley Brook from Source to Black-Bourne Brook	Poor (2019)	Poor (2019)	Fail (2019)
Plants Brook Catchment (trib of Tame)	Moderate (2019)	Moderate (2019)	Fail (2019)
Ford Brook from Source to River Tame	Moderate (2019)	Moderate (2019)	Fail (2019)
Tame - conf two arms to R Rea	Moderate (2019)	Moderate (2019)	Fail (2019)

Key Habitats [2]			
Broad Habitat Type	Arable & Horticultural	Priority Habitat	
Arable agriculture dominates much of the sub-area. These fields are mostly of 18 th and 19 th century Parliamentary enclosure origin. No Priority Habitat Arable Field Margins have been recorded.			
Broad Habitat Type	Boundary & Linear Features	Priority Habitat	Hedgerows
Numerous field boundary hedgerows throughout the sub-area associated with mostly rectilinear fields created through Parliamentary enclosure, though some may be from earlier piecemeal enclosure in the late medieval/ early post-medieval periods. Only a small proportion of the hedgerows have been assessed against the Local Wildlife Sites selection criteria and of these a number in the central and northern parts of the sub-area have been selected as SLINCs. These are described as having a diverse woody component with mature standards and an acidic field-layer. The designated hedgerows form the boundaries to roads and tracks and are likely to be of more ancient origin than the more numerous rectilinear field boundary hedgerows of 18 th and 19 th century enclosures.			
Broad Habitat Type	Standing Open Waters	Priority Habitat	Ponds
A number of ponds have been recorded within designated SINCs.			
Broad Habitat Type	Rivers and Streams	Priority Habitat	Rivers
Two headwater streams have been recorded in the sub-area. These are a tributary of the Anchor Brook which rises in the north-west of the sub-area and flows west, and the Fotherley Brook which rises in the centre of the sub-area in Corporation Wood and flows east.			
Broad Habitat Type	Acid Grassland	Priority Habitat	Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
Species-poor lowland dry acid grassland is present at Barr Beacon Local Nature Reserve. A small number of pastures within the sub-area are described as unimproved and supporting acid to neutral grassland with a diverse flora. Pastures are frequent throughout the sub-area and further areas of acidic grassland may be present. Some roadside grasslands may also support the Priority Habitat.			
Broad Habitat Type	Neutral Grassland	Priority Habitat	
Areas of grazed pastures, roadside grasslands and grasslands of more recent origin - such as at inactive quarries - may be neutral.			
Broad Habitat Type	Dwarf Shrub Heath	Priority Habitat	Lowland Heathland
There are small areas of lowland heathland at Barr Beacon Local Nature Reserve which have been created via the strewing of cuttings from nearby semi-natural lowland heathland sites. There are records of Heather and other heathland species at Branton Hill Quarry and Shire Oak Local Nature Reserve.			

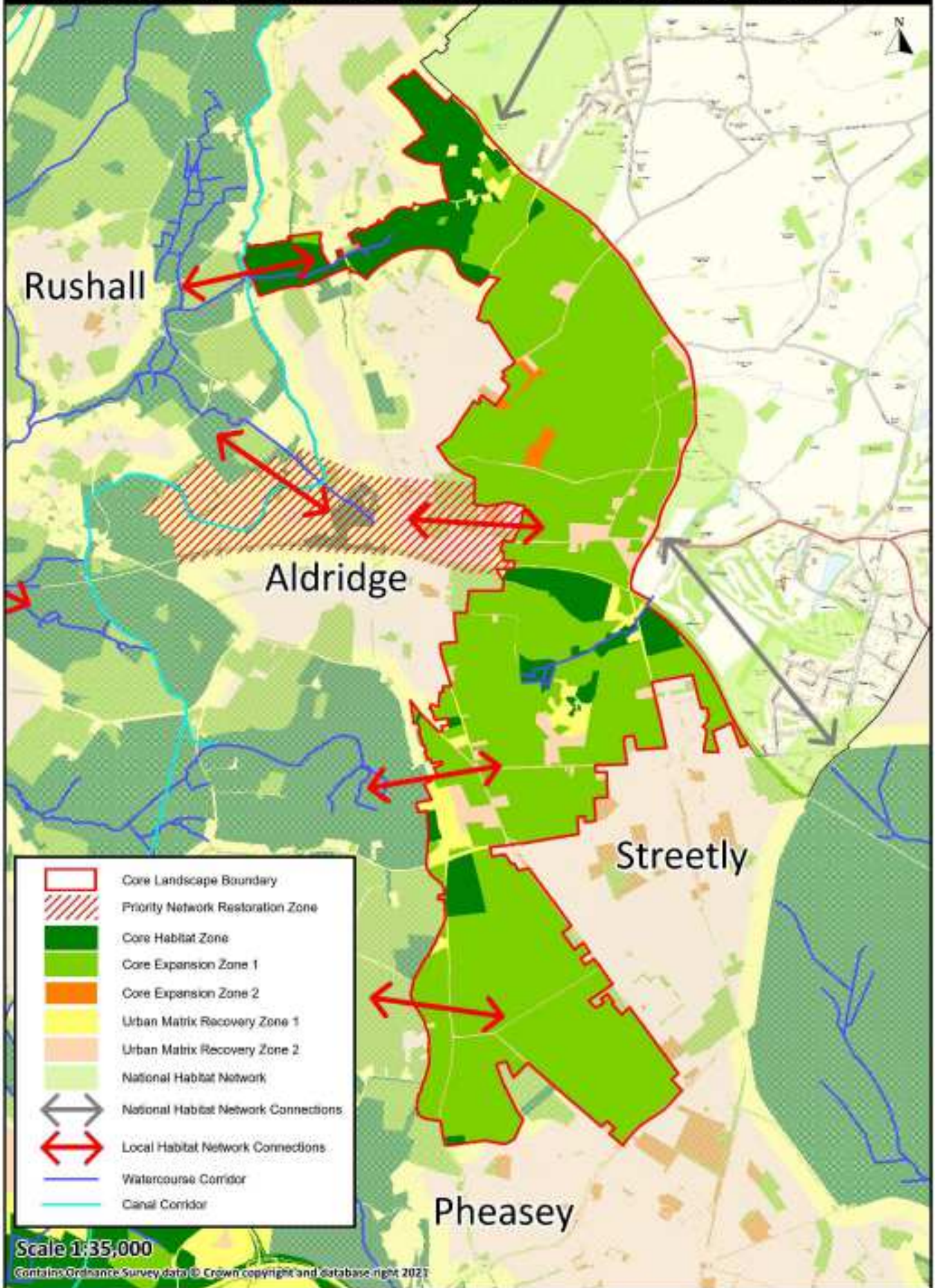
Key Habitats [2]			
Broad Habitat Type	Improved Grassland	Priority Habitat	Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh
There are potentially areas of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh along the Fotherley Brook.			
Broad Habitat Type	Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Priority Habitat	
The woodlands in the sub-area are mostly of planted or recent secondary origin and are described as having a botanically poor acidic field-layer. A number of these sites are designated as SLINC.			
Broad Habitat Type	Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Priority Habitat	Traditional Orchards
A number of small orchards associated with houses have been recorded on the Traditional Orchards HAP Inventory 2020.			

Key Species [3]	
Bird indicators	
Farmland	Common Reed Bunting, Eurasian Skylark, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Jackdaw, Kestrel, Lapwing, Linnet, Rook, Starling, Stock Dove, Whitethroat, Woodpigeon, Yellowhammer.
Woodland	Blackbird, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Common Chaffinch, Dunnock, Eurasian Blackcap, Eurasian Blue Tit, Eurasian Bullfinch, Eurasian Nuthatch, Eurasian Wren, European Green Woodpecker, Garden Warbler, Goldcrest, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Jay, Lesser Redpoll, Long-tailed Tit, Robin, Siskin, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Treecreeper, Willow Warbler.
Water & Wetland	Common Reed Bunting, Eurasian Coot, Grey Heron, Grey Wagtail, Kingfisher, Lapwing, Little Grebe, Mallard, Moorhen.
Other	Black-headed Gull, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Collared Dove, Common House Martin, Cuckoo, Eurasian Magpie, Greylag Goose, House Sparrow, Meadow Pipit, Mistle Thrush, Northern Raven, Pied Wagtail, Swallow, Swift, Whinchat.
Amphibians & Reptiles	
Amphibians	<i>Common Frog, Common Toad, Great Crested Newt, Smooth Newt.</i>
Reptiles	none
Mammals	
Bats	<i>Brown Long-eared Bat, Common Pipistrelle, Daubenton's Bat, Lesser Noctule, Natterer's Bat, Noctule Bat, Soprano Pipistrelle, Whiskered/Brandt's Bat.</i>
Other	<i>Eurasian Badger, West European Hedgehog.</i>
Fish	
Bony Fish	none
Jawless Fish	none
Invertebrates	
Assemblage type	
Flora (axiophytes)	
Woodland	<i>Ajuga reptans, Allium ursinum, Anemone nemorosa, Angelica sylvestris, Athyrium filix-femina, Brachypodium sylvaticum, Bromopsis ramosa, Caltha palustris, Carex paniculata, Carex remota, Carex sylvatica, Chaerophyllum temulum, Deschampsia flexuosa, Dioscorea communis, Equisetum sylvaticum, Equisetum telmateia, Frangula</i>

	<i>alnus, Lysimachia nemorum, Malus sylvestris, Mercurialis perennis, Moehringia trinervia, Oxalis acetosella, Persicaria hydropiper, Quercus petraea, Stellaria holostea, Teucrium scorodonia.</i>
Grassland	<i>Achillea ptarmica, Agrimonia eupatoria, Aira caryophyllea, Ajuga reptans, Brachypodium sylvaticum, Caltha palustris, Campanula rotundifolia, Centaurium erythraea, Cerastium semidecandrum, Cirsium dissectum, Cirsium palustre, Dactylorhiza praetermissa, Danthonia decumbens, Daucus carota subsp. carota, Deschampsia flexuosa, Equisetum sylvaticum, Galium saxatile, Isolepis setacea, Leontodon hispidus, Lotus pedunculatus, Nardus stricta, Odontites vernus, Phleum bertolonii, Potentilla erecta, Potentilla sterilis, Rhinanthus minor, Sherardia arvensis, Silene flos-cuculi, Stellaria holostea, Succisa pratensis, Trifolium medium, Trifolium arvense, Trifolium medium, Vicia tetrasperma.</i>
Heathland	<i>Aira praecox, Calluna vulgaris, Campanula rotundifolia, Carex nigra, Carex pilulifera, Danthonia decumbens, Deschampsia flexuosa, Erica cinerea, Galium saxatile, Luzula multiflora, Nardus stricta, Potentilla erecta, Salix aurita, Teucrium scorodonia, Ulex gallii.</i>
Mires	<i>Achillea ptarmica, Angelica sylvestris, Athyrium filix-femina, Caltha palustris, Carex nigra, Carex panicea, Carex paniculata, Carex viridula subsp. oedocarpa, Cirsium dissectum, Cirsium palustre, Dactylorhiza praetermissa, Dryopteris carthusiana, Eleocharis palustris, Galium palustre, Glyceria declinata, Isolepis setacea, Juncus acutiflorus, Juncus bulbosus, Lotus pedunculatus, Luzula multiflora, Mentha arvensis, Persicaria hydropiper, Pulicaria dysenterica, Ranunculus hederaceus, Silene flos-cuculi, Stellaria alsine, Succisa pratensis, Triglochin palustre, Veronica beccabunga.</i>
Open Water	<i>Butomus umbellatus, Carex paniculata, Eleocharis palustris, Galium palustre.</i>
Post-industrial (water-stressed)	<i>Agrimonia eupatoria, Aira caryophyllea, Aira praecox, Centaurea scabiosa, Centaurium erythraea, Cerastium semidecandrum, Daucus carota subsp. carota, Deschampsia flexuosa, Filago vulgaris, Jacobaea erucifolia, Reseda lutea, Senecio viscosus, Sherardia arvensis, Trifolium arvense, Trifolium medium, Vicia tetrasperma.</i>
Cultivation	<i>Apera spica-venti, Fumaria muralis subsp. boraiei, Thlaspi arvense, Vicia tetrasperma.</i>

Ecological Connectivity
Local Habitat Network
<p>Direct ecological connection to the local habitat network in Core Landscape 04 (Brownhills Common & Pelsall) and Core Landscape 06 (Park Lime Pits, Cuckoo's Nook & Great Barr Hall).</p> <p>Midlands Heathland Heartland Lowland Heathland Nature Recovery Opportunity Mapping (EcoRecord and Staffordshire Ecological Record, 2021) identifies a heathland connectivity bottleneck between the two main heathland sites within the ecological sub-area (Shire Oak Park and Barr Beacon) which are located at the north and south of the sub-area respectively.</p>
National Habitat Network
<p>Direct ecological connection to the National Habitat Network in rural South Staffordshire.</p> <p>Indirect connection to Sutton Park NNR (Birmingham) via Little Aston Golf Course and approximately 0.5 km urban development (Garden - large, mature). Midlands Heathland Heartland Lowland Heathland Nature Recovery Opportunity Mapping identifies a heathland connectivity bottleneck between Shire Oak Park and Sutton Park NNR (Birmingham).</p> <p>Indirect connection to Cannock Chase SAC (Staffordshire) via rural heathland sites in Walsall and Staffordshire (inc. Chasewater and The Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI) identified in Midlands Heathland Heartland Lowland Heathland Nature Recovery Opportunity Mapping.</p>

CL05 - Barr Beacon, Druid's Heath and Shire Oak - Components & Connectivity



Ecological Sub-area Opportunities

Focus Habitats		
Habitat	Action	Measure
Arable Field Margins	Create new	New habitat
Hedgerows	Improve management of existing	Habitat in good condition
	Restore through gapping up	Habitat in good condition
	Establish hedgerow trees	Habitat structure improved
Lowland Heathland	Improve habitat at existing sites	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Lowland dry acid grassland	Improve habitat at existing sites	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Coppice	Habitat structure improved
	Create woodland edge	Habitat structure improved
	Diversify woody component	Habitat structure improved
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Ponds	Restore existing	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Rivers	Improve soil management	Reduced silt inputs to watercourses
	Reduce artificial inputs	Improved chemical status
	Restore hydromorphology (naturalise modified channels)	Improved ecological status

Target Species	
Species/Species Group	Measure
Adder	Confirmed recent records
Breeding farmland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Breeding woodland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Brown Long-eared Bat	Confirmed recent records
Common Lizard	Confirmed recent records
Cuckoo	Confirmed recent records
Great Crested Newt	Increased abundance and number of sites
Heather	Increased abundance and number of sites
Hedgehog	Confirmed recent records
Woodland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Grassland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Mires axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Open Water axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Post-industrial axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance

Geodiversity		
Site	Action	Measure
Pinfold Lane Quarry	Vegetation removal/alternative Focus Habitat restoration or creation	Improved access to exposures/ alternative Focus Habitat restored or created
Shire Oak Quarry	Vegetation removal/alternative Focus Habitat restoration or creation	Improved access to exposures/ alternative Focus Habitat restored or created

Connectivity Opportunities	
Local Habitat Network	
Connection	Action
Within Core Landscape CL05	Heathland associated habitat enhancement and creation at arable and other undeveloped land including golf courses, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Woodland enhancement and planting on non-grassland or heathland sites.
	Field boundary hedgerow restoration and creation.
Priority Network Restoration Zone linking CL04 and CL05	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation on undeveloped land including parks, green spaces, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Woodland enhancement and small-scale planting.
	Planting of street trees along urban roads.
	Planting of standard trees in parks, green spaces and school grounds.
	Creation of new ponds.
	Enhancement of Daw End Branch Canal corridor including increasing extent of adjoining terrestrial habitats.
National Habitat Network	
Staffordshire Heathlands inc. Chasewater and The Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI	Heathland associated habitat enhancement and creation at arable and other undeveloped land including golf courses, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Field boundary hedgerow restoration and creation.
	Planting of street trees along urban roads.
	Creation of new ponds and wetlands.
Sutton Park	Heathland associated habitat enhancement and creation at arable and other undeveloped land including golf courses, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Field boundary hedgerow restoration and creation.
	Planting of street trees along urban roads.
	Creation of new ponds and wetlands.

Information and Data Sources		
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Landuse	Ecological Evaluation of Birmingham and Black Country GIS data set, EcoRecord.	2021
Topography	OS Terrain 50 GIS data set, Ordnance Survey.	2021
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This is a UK-habitat classification prepared by the UK Biodiversity Group that classifies all terrestrial and freshwater habitats in the UK into 37 broad habitat types. UK BAP Priority Habitats are a range of semi-natural habitat types that were identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action. The original Priority Habitat list was created between 1995 and 1999 and revised in 2007. The list of Priority Habitats has been used to help draw up statutory lists of habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The suite of habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity (formerly Priority Habitats) nest into the defined Broad Habitat Types.

[3] KEY SPECIES

Bird Indicators: Species listed under UK Biodiversity Indicator C5, Birds of the wider countryside and at sea (JNCC). The indicator shows changes in the breeding population sizes of common native birds of farmland and woodland and of freshwater and marine habitats in the UK.

Amphibians & Reptiles: All amphibian and reptile species native to the UK are included.

Mammals: Those protected by UK or EU law, included on the current list of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006 or amended), and those included on the latest B&BC LBAP list of Priority Habitats/Species.

Fish: Those protected by UK or EU law, included on the current list of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006 or amended), and those included on the latest B&BC LBAP list of Priority Habitats/Species.

Invertebrates: Pantheon Assemblage Types Analysis.

Flora (axiophytes): Those included on the Birmingham & the Black Country list of axiophytes (administered by EcoRecord) by four locally defined habitat types.

Ecological Sub-area Statement of Biodiversity Priorities – Technical Appendix

Sub-area name	Sandwell Valley	Sub-area ref.	CL07
Natural Character Area	Cannock Chase and Cank Wood	NCA ref.	67
Local Authority Area	Sandwell and Walsall	Area km²	9.01

Ecological Sub-area Description

Overview

Sandwell Valley comprises a large area of open space at the approximate centre of the Birmingham and Black Country conurbation, and forms part of the Black Country's eastern boundary with Birmingham. The ecological sub-area is bisected by the M5 and M6 motorways, and almost entirely surrounded by urban development. A section of the River Tame flows west-east through the area and there are numerous small tributaries of this. The Tame Valley Canal traverses the northern part of the area (through the M5/M6 motorway junction), as does an active railway line.

The landscape of the ecological sub-area remains dominated by the pre-urban field pattern, though only parts of this remain actively farmed. In the south of the area are the remains of Sandwell Hall country house and earlier Benedictine priory, as well as features such as pools associated with the 18th century designed landscape. Ancillary buildings, stables and parts of a walled garden remain standing and have been restored for use as Sandwell Park Farm visitor centre. To the north of Swan Pool are the remains of Sandwell Park Colliery which was operational in the early 20th century.

A large floodwater storage lake (Forge Mill Lake) was constructed alongside the River Tame in the east of the ecological sub-area in the early 1980s. Part of the lake and the surrounding area are managed as RSPB Sandwell Valley nature reserve.

Land Use

Much of the southern part of Sandwell Valley is accessible open space including at Forge Mill Lake, Priory Woods and Sot's Hole Local Nature Reserves, as well as the more formal Dartmouth Park and King George Playing Fields in the south-west. There are also two golf courses (Sandwell Park and Dartmouth Golf Course) and West Bromwich Crematorium. The remainder of the southern section is farmed, with ley pasture, arable and permanent pasture all present.

Further north is the large triangular junction of the M5 and M6 motorways within which is a sewage treatment works, whilst to the north of the M6 is an electricity sub-station. The remainder of the northern section is comprised of further informal accessible open space, school grounds, Walsall Golf Course and a number of sports pitches, as well as Peak House Farm field system of irregular pre-enclosure fields which are actively farmed (see Historic Environment Area Designations).

Topography

The highest elevations within Sandwell Valley are at the southern and close to the northern end at an elevation of 170 meters. From these points the land slopes gently down to the valley of the River Tame which is at an elevation of 100 metres.

Geology

The southern part of the ecological sub-area is dominated by sedimentary Alveley Member mudstone bedrock formed between 309.5 and 308 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. The northern part is dominated by Coalbrookdale Formation mudstone formed between 433.4 and 427.4 million years ago during the Silurian period, with a small area of Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation Mudstone, siltstone and sandstone formed between 319 and 318 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. In the central area there is a formation of Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation mudstone, siltstone and sandstone formed between 318 and 309.5 million years ago during the Carboniferous period.

Parts of the southern area are overlain with superficial deposits of Devensian diamicton till formed between 116 and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period, and Mid Pleistocene Diamicton till formed between

860 and 116 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period. Following the course of the River Tame there are river terrace deposits of sand and gravel formed between 2.588 million years ago and the present during the Quaternary period, and more recent alluvial clay, silt, sand and gravel formed between 11.8 thousand years ago and the present.

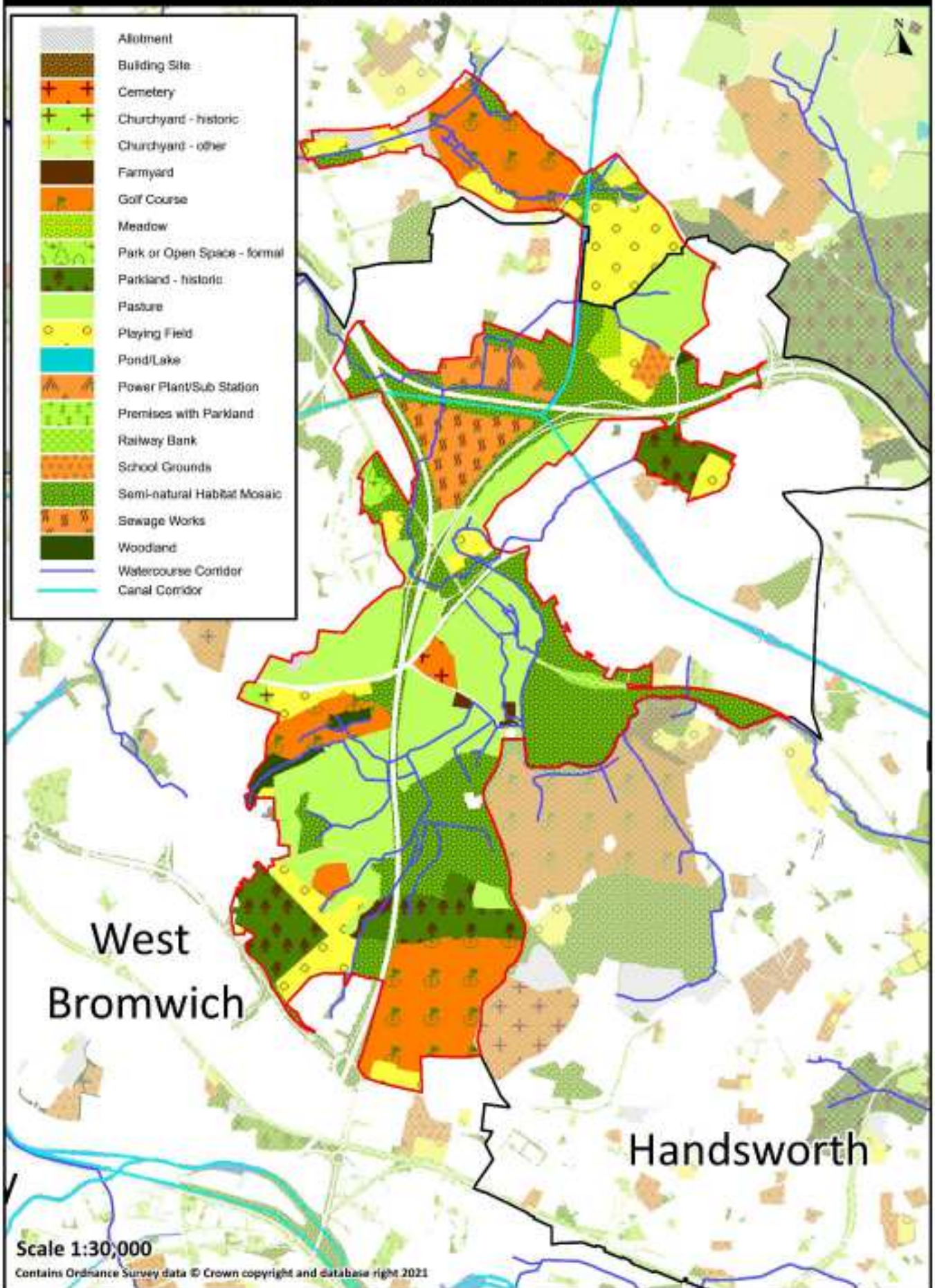
Geopark Sites

- Sandwell Valley Country Park (GR SP01939149)

Soils

The ecological sub-area is dominated by slowly permeable seasonally wet, slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils with moderate fertility and impeded drainage. In the north the soils are slowly permeable, seasonally wet acid loamy and clayey soils with low fertility and impeded drainage, and in the central area around Forge Mill Lake the soils are naturally wet, very acid sandy and loamy soils with very low fertility.

CL07 - Sandwell Valley - Land Use



Historic Landscape Character Areas			
Reference		Name	
SD07		Sandwell Valley	
<p>The central and southern part of the ecological sub-area is coterminous with character areas SD07 Sandwell Valley, which is dominated by Sandwell Valley Country Park and agricultural land. The Character Area was originally part of the estate owned by the Earls of Dartmouth from the early 18th century. Sandwell Hall (demolished in 1928) was built by the first Earl on the site of the 12th century Benedictine priory close to the Sand Well spring. The Character Area contains the Registered Park and Garden Dartmouth Park which became public park in 1877.</p>			
SD02		Newton, Hamstead & Great Barr	
<p>Lying to the north of Sandwell Valley and comprising the north-eastern part of the ecological sub-area id SD02 Newton, Hamstead & Great Barr. The modern character of the area is dominated by 20th century residential housing, with areas of surviving fields in the north-west of the character area that continue beyond the Borough boundary into Walsall (WL09). Until the 20th century this area was largely agricultural, crossed by the Tame Valley Canal which opened in 1844.</p>			
SD05		Yew Tree	
<p>A small part of the ecological sub-area to the north of the M5/M6 junction lies within SD05 Yew Tree. The historic character of the area was defined almost entirely of agricultural land much of it worked from Delves Farm and Yew Tree Farm. Residential development began to cover this area after the First World War. The Tame Valley Canal, on the southern edge of the area, was opened in 1844 and, as such was one of the last Black Country canals.</p>			
WL11		South East Walsall	
<p>The northern part of the ecological sub-area lies within WL11 South East Walsall. During the medieval period this area was dominated by open fields with a small manor house or settlement at The Delves. There was also a large deer park to the west of Great Barr, although its extent is unknown. By the mid-18th century a mill had been established at New Mills in the south-west of the area and a country house has been constructed by the Delves. At this time the landscape was still largely agricultural and by the late 18th century- early 19th century woodland had been established in the south-east of the area near Great Barr and two further country houses had been built.</p>			

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]			
Reference		Name	
APA 14		Shustoke Farm Moated site	
<p>The APA contains earthworks remains of a possible medieval moated site. The moat is shown on the 1841 Tithe map. LiDAR shows remnants of the moat to the north and west and its survival was confirmed by a field survey carried out in 2001. There is therefore the potential for archaeological remains associated with the moat and potential medieval and post-medieval buildings. To the north of the moated site are the earthwork remains of three fish ponds linked to the moated site by leats. The moat, fish ponds and leats have the potential to contain waterlogged remains and there is potential for organic preservation.</p>			
AHHLV 25		Peak House Farm Field System	
<p>The AHHLV contains a well-preserved example of a pre-enclosure field system. Evidence of ridge and furrow is visible across the site as cropmarks (but no earthworks appear to survive). Prehistoric finds have been recovered within this area and cropmarks indicative of below-ground archaeological remains have also been identified, highlighting the archaeological potential of the area. Many of the field boundaries are marked by drainage ditches linked to the moated site to the south (APA 24) and a number of hedgerows are recorded as ancient hedgerows. LiDAR shows a small mound in the AHHLV (NGR 403764 295377).</p>			
APA 24		Peak House Farm Moated Site	
<p>The APA contains the remains of a possible moated site. The Environment Agency LiDAR shows the earthwork remains of a moat and a possible building platform within the APA. There is no building at this location on the 1817 OSD map, or 1st-4th edition OS maps, suggesting that the moated site is of medieval or early post-medieval date. The APA has the potential to contain below-ground archaeological remains associated with the manor house</p>			

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]			
and the moat. The moat may contain waterlogged deposits, which would provide insight into land use in the area during the medieval period.			
Reference	APA 27	Name	The River Tame
The APA contains part of the route of the River Tame; there is considered to be potential for previously unknown prehistoric activity (including Bronze Age burnt mounds) and environmental evidence present associated with the former water course. Prior to the industrial revolution the land adjacent to the river would have been utilised for mills and other water-based industries. Accordingly, there is potential for archaeological remains associated with these features to survive. Aerial photographs show a number of tributaries and drainage channels associated with the river, which may be possible mill leats. The APA contains the infilled Old Forge Mill pool. There is potential for archaeological remains associated with the Old Forge and Mill. Part of the area was disturbed during the 19th century by the Grand Union Line Railway. However, the majority of the area remains relatively undisturbed. Some ridge and furrow earthworks are present within the APA.			
Reference	AHHLV 26	Name	Wigmore Farm Ridge and Furrow
The AHHLV contains the several areas of surviving earthwork ridge and furrow and a (possibly) medieval holloway. These features are surviving remnants of the open field system within the area. The field system in this area appears to date back to at least the 19th century, and may form part of a pre-enclosure field system that has been subject to some more recent boundary loss. Remnants of a watercourse and two ponds (fish ponds?) of unknown date are present within the AHHLV.			
Reference	APA 25	Name	All Saints Church
The APA contains All Saints Church and Graveyard. All Saints Church is situated on the site of a medieval church, elements of the 14th or 15th century tower survive within the present day Church. The church is surrounded by a graveyard, which has the potential to contain human remains dating from the medieval to post-medieval periods.			
Reference	APA 26	Name	Sot's Hole Stream
The APA contains the remains of a burnt mound and a stone mound as well as several recorded scatters of prehistoric flints. The APA is situated upon sand and gravel deposits resulting in the formation of natural springs in prehistoric times, which would have made it a focus for activity. The HER records a number of patches of ridge and furrow within the APA although these were not visible on the Environment Agency LiDAR survey of the site. Several drainage channels are evident within the APA and fish ponds and a dam are recorded in the very western part of the area (shown on 1817 Ordnance Survey drawings of the area) near Parsons Farm. The ponds and dams were used to control the flow of water supplied to the dams along the River Tame and its tributaries.			
Reference	AHHLV 48	Name	Chambers Wood
The AHHLV is an area of semi-natural ancient woodland. Accordingly, it has the potential to contain well preserved archaeological remains (although none are currently known), and may contain features associated with medieval and post-medieval woodland management. Areas of semi-natural ancient woodland are areas of natural woodland which may have been subject to some previous woodland management and have been in use as woodland since at least the 1600s. Accordingly these areas have the potential to contain well preserved archaeological remains. Areas of ancient woodland represent surviving patches of the historic landscape that date back to the medieval or early post-medieval periods.			
Reference	AHHLV 50	Name	Dartmouth Golf Course Wood
The AHHLV is an area of semi-natural ancient woodland. Accordingly, it has the potential to contain well preserved archaeological remains (although none are currently known), and may contain features associated with medieval and post-medieval woodland management. Areas of semi-natural ancient woodland are areas of natural woodland which may have been subject to some previous woodland management and have been in use as woodland since at least the 1600s. Accordingly these areas have the potential to contain well preserved archaeological remains. Areas of ancient woodland represent surviving patches of the historic landscape that date back to the medieval or early post-medieval periods.			
Reference	DLHHV 1	Name	Sandwell Park
The DLHHV was originally part of the estate associated with Sandwell Priory. It was later sold to the Earl of Dartmouth, who in turn sold it to West Bromwich Council in 1947. The park today contains remnants of the mid-18 th century designed landscape although the original design has been eroded by the construction of later			

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]

transport infrastructure. During the inter-war period, parts of the site were used as a colliery. Several earlier features associated with the parkland including ornamental pools (Swan and Pleasure pools), an ice house and a ha-ha (a bank and ditch used to keep out animals) survive within the present day landscape. Swan Pool started life as a mill pool before being extended twice, firstly to take the extra water from the adjacent mines and secondly as a leisure facility. Earlier archaeological remains such as the scheduled remains of Sandwell Hall and the earlier Benedictine Priory, which is a scheduled monument (NHLE 1017763) and areas of non-designated ridge and furrow are also present, highlighting various land uses within the park over time. A number of archaeological features including a prehistoric burnt mound have been recorded within the site, further highlighting the archaeological interest of the area. The scheduled monument has a high level of archaeological interest, and could be directly impacted by unsympathetic development e.g. ground works.

Waterbody Catchments

River Basin District	Humber	Management Catchment	Tame Anker and Mease
Waterbody Catchment	Overall Classification	Ecological	Chemical
Tame - confluence two arms to R Rea Water Body	Moderate (2019)	Moderate (2019)	Moderate (2019)

Key Habitats [2]

Broad Habitat Type	Woodland	Priority Habitat	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
There are two areas of woodland designated as Ancient Semi-natural Woodland in the south-west of the ecological sub-area (Chambers Wood and Bluebell Wood). There are further small areas of mature Oak woodland scattered through the south-west which may be ancient or old plantations.			
Broad Habitat Type	Woodland	Priority Habitat	
Younger woodland is frequent throughout Sandwell Valley, either as plantations or spontaneous woodland on abandoned sites. Planted areas include around Forge Mill Lake, along fairways in the area's many golf courses, around the sewage works and along some of the motorway embankments. Older ornamental plantations are found around the parkland of the former Sandwell Hall. Young woodland now occupies the site of the former Sandwell Park Colliery, though it is not known if this is planted or spontaneous.			
Broad Habitat Type	Grassland	Priority Habitat	Lowland meadows
There are small areas of remnant meadow in Priory Woods Local Nature Reserve, though the extent or condition of this habitat is not known. The irregular fields of the Peak House Farm field system have in recent years been cut for hay, however, these are not floristically diverse and are likely to have been managed as pasture prior to this.			
Broad Habitat Type	Grassland	Priority Habitat	
Grassland of various sward types dominates much of Sandwell Valley. Permeant pasture exists in the southern part of the ecological sub-area, with the surviving ridge and furrow at the Wigmore Farm being a notable surviving remnant of the former open field system of the area. Throughout the publicly accessible parts of Sandwell Valley there are areas of irregularly managed grassland that is relatively species-poor and rank. There are also significant areas of regularly mown grassland in the formal parks and on the golf course fairways.			
Broad Habitat Type	Boundary	Priority Habitat	Hedgerows
Numerous field boundary hedgerows exist throughout the ecological sub-area, either demarcating the boundaries of existing fields or as remnants within areas now used for alternative purposes. It is thought that most of Sandwell Valley was enclosed from mediaeval open fields (see Wigmore Farm), however, the fields at Peak House Farm are considered to be an uncommon example of earlier enclosure. Here the field-pattern is notably more irregular and the hedgerows have been allowed to grow to a substantial size.			
Broad Habitat Type	Freshwater	Priority Habitat	Rivers

A stretch of the River Tame runs through Sandwell Valley, entering the ecological sub-area in the north-west adjacent to the M6 and meandering south and then eastwards around Forge Mill Lake and exiting into Birmingham. The channel is heavily modified, being of uniform width and with raised flood banks, with few natural erosion and depositional features, and very little aquatic vegetation. The catchment is classified Moderate status by the Environment Agency and suffers from urban diffuse pollution.

There are numerous minor channels which flow into the River Tame from across the ecological sub-area. These range from unmodified watercourses to artificial drainage channels.

Broad Habitat Type	Freshwater	Priority Habitat	Eutrophic standing waters
<p>There are a number of artificial standing waters throughout Sandwell Valley. These include an ornamental pool and boating lake in Dartmouth Park, the large floodwater storage lake Forge Mill Lake, and those associated with the former grounds of Sandwell Hall (Pleasure Pool and Swan Pool). These vary significantly in ecological value, with significant works having been undertaken for the benefit of wetland birds at RSPB Sandwell Valley (parts of Forge Mill Lake), and wetland and adjacent terrestrial vegetation having developed at the Pleasure Pool. Conversely the boating lake has artificial banks, and very few naturalised features and associated species.</p>			

Key Species [3]

Bird indicators

Farmland	Common Reed Bunting, Eurasian Skylark, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Jackdaw, Kestrel, Lapwing, Rook, Starling, Stock Dove, Western Yellow Wagtail, Whitethroat, Woodpigeon, Yellowhammer.
Woodland	Blackbird, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Common Chaffinch, Dunnock, Eurasian Blackcap, Eurasian Blue Tit, Eurasian Bullfinch, Eurasian Nuthatch, Eurasian Wren, European Green Woodpecker, Garden Warbler, Goldcrest, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Jay, Lesser Redpoll, Lesser Whitethroat, Long-tailed Tit, Marsh Tit, Redstart, Robin, Siskin, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Spotted Flycatcher, Tawny Owl, Treecreeper, Willow Tit, Willow Warbler.
Water & Wetland	Cetti's Warbler, Common Merganser, Common Reed Bunting, Common Sandpiper, Eurasian Coot, Great Crested Grebe, Grey Heron, Grey Wagtail, Kingfisher, Lapwing, Little Egret, Little Grebe, Mallard, Moorhen, Mute Swan, Oystercatcher, Redshank, Reed Warbler, Sand Martin, Sedge Warbler, Snipe, Teal, Tufted Duck, Western Yellow Wagtail.
Other	Black-headed Gull, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Collared Dove, Common House Martin, Eurasian Magpie, Gadwall, Golden Plover, House Sparrow, Meadow Pipit, Mistle Thrush, Northern Raven, Peregrine, Pied Wagtail, Pochard, Red Kite, Shelduck, Shoveler, Stonechat, Swallow, Swift, Whinchat.

Amphibians & Reptiles

Amphibians	Common Frog, Common Toad, Great Crested Newt, Smooth Newt.
Reptiles	none

Mammals

Bats	Brown Long-eared Bat, Common Pipistrelle, Daubenton's Bat, Lesser Noctule, Nathusius's Pipistrelle, Noctule Bat, Soprano Pipistrelle.
Other	Eurasian Badger, Eurasian Common Shrew, European Water Vole, Harvest Mouse, West European Hedgehog.

Fish

Bony Fish	none
Jawless Fish	none

Invertebrates

Assemblage type	
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Flora (axiophytes)

Woodland	<i>Ajuga reptans</i> , <i>Allium ursinum</i> , <i>Anemone nemorosa</i> , <i>Angelica sylvestris</i> , <i>Athyrium filix-femina</i> , <i>Blechnum spicant</i> , <i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i> , <i>Bromopsis ramosa</i> , <i>Caltha palustris</i> , <i>Carex paniculata</i> , <i>Carex remota</i> , <i>Carex sylvatica</i> ,
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	<i>Chrysosplenium oppositifolium</i> , <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> , <i>Dioscorea communis</i> , <i>Dryopteris affinis</i> , <i>Epipactis helleborine</i> , <i>Equisetum telmateia</i> , <i>Festuca gigantea</i> , <i>Filipendula ulmaria</i> , <i>Fragaria vesca</i> , <i>Frangula alnus</i> , <i>Galium odoratum</i> , <i>Lysimachia vulgaris</i> , <i>Malus sylvestris</i> , <i>Melica uniflora</i> , <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> , <i>Milium effusum</i> , <i>Molinia caerulea</i> , <i>Oxalis acetosella</i> , <i>Persicaria hydropiper</i> , <i>Quercus petraea</i> , <i>Sorbus torminalis</i> , <i>Stellaria holostea</i> , <i>Teucrium scorodonia</i> , <i>Tilia cordata</i> , <i>Torilis japonica</i> , <i>Valeriana officinalis</i> , <i>Veronica montana</i> .
Grassland	<i>Achillea ptarmica</i> , <i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i> , <i>Agrostis canina</i> , <i>Aira caryophyllea</i> , <i>Ajuga reptans</i> , <i>Blackstonia perfoliata</i> , <i>Blechnum spicant</i> , <i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i> , <i>Caltha palustris</i> , <i>Carex disticha</i> , <i>Centaurium erythraea</i> , <i>Cirsium palustre</i> , <i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i> , <i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii x praetermissa = D. x grandis</i> , <i>Dactylorhiza praetermissa</i> , <i>Daucus carota subsp. carota</i> , <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> , <i>Euphrasia officinalis agg.</i> , <i>Festuca filiformis</i> , <i>Filipendula ulmaria</i> , <i>Fragaria vesca</i> , <i>Galium mollugo subsp. erectum</i> , <i>Galium saxatile</i> , <i>Lathyrus nissolia</i> , <i>Leontodon hispidus</i> , <i>Linum catharticum</i> , <i>Lotus pedunculatus</i> , <i>Nardus stricta</i> , <i>Odontites vernus</i> , <i>Ornithopus perpusillus</i> , <i>Persicaria bistorta</i> , <i>Phleum bertolonii</i> , <i>Potentilla anglica</i> , <i>Potentilla erecta</i> , <i>Potentilla sterilis</i> , <i>Rhinanthus minor</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i> , <i>Silene flos-cuculi</i> , <i>Stachys officinalis</i> , <i>Stellaria holostea</i> , <i>Succisa pratensis</i> , <i>Trifolium medium</i> .
Heathland	<i>Agrostis canina</i> , <i>Aira praecox</i> , <i>Blechnum spicant</i> , <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> , <i>Carex nigra</i> , <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> , <i>Festuca filiformis</i> , <i>Galium saxatile</i> , <i>Juncus squarrosus</i> , <i>Molinia caerulea</i> , <i>Nardus stricta</i> , <i>Ornithopus perpusillus</i> , <i>Potentilla erecta</i> , <i>Salix aurita</i> , <i>Teucrium scorodonia</i> , <i>Ulex gallii</i> .
Mires	<i>Achillea ptarmica</i> , <i>Agrostis canina</i> , <i>Angelica sylvestris</i> , <i>Athyrium filix-femina</i> , <i>Caltha palustris</i> , <i>Carex acutiformis</i> , <i>Carex nigra</i> , <i>Carex paniculata</i> , <i>Carex riparia</i> , <i>Carex viridula subsp. oedocarpa</i> , <i>Cirsium palustre</i> , <i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i> , <i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii x praetermissa = D. x grandis</i> , <i>Dactylorhiza praetermissa</i> , <i>Dryopteris carthusiana</i> , <i>Eleocharis palustris</i> , <i>Epilobium palustre</i> , <i>Equisetum fluviatile</i> , <i>Equisetum palustre</i> , <i>Filipendula ulmaria</i> , <i>Galium palustre</i> , <i>Glyceria declinata</i> , <i>Glyceria notata</i> , <i>Hydrocotyle vulgaris</i> , <i>Hypericum tetrapterum</i> , <i>Jacobaea aquatica</i> , <i>Juncus acutiflorus</i> , <i>Juncus squarrosus</i> , <i>Lotus pedunculatus</i> , <i>Lysimachia vulgaris</i> , <i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i> , <i>Molinia caerulea</i> , <i>Persicaria hydropiper</i> , <i>Potentilla palustris</i> , <i>Pulicaria dysenterica</i> , <i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i> , <i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i> , <i>Ranunculus flammula</i> , <i>Ranunculus hederaceus</i> , <i>Silene flos-cuculi</i> , <i>Sparganium emersum</i> , <i>Stachys palustris</i> , <i>Stellaria alsine</i> , <i>Succisa pratensis</i> , <i>Thalictrum flavum</i> , <i>Valeriana officinalis</i> , <i>Veronica beccabunga</i> .
Open Water	<i>Bidens tripartita</i> , <i>Butomus umbellatus</i> , <i>Carex acutiformis</i> , <i>Carex paniculata</i> , <i>Carex riparia</i> , <i>Eleocharis palustris</i> , <i>Equisetum fluviatile</i> , <i>Galium palustre</i> , <i>Glyceria notata</i> , <i>Luronium natans</i> , <i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i> , <i>Potamogeton perfoliatus</i> , <i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i> , <i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i> , <i>Sagittaria sagittifolia</i> , <i>Schoenoplectus lacustris</i> .
Post-industrial (water-stressed)	<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i> , <i>Aira caryophyllea</i> , <i>Aira praecox</i> , <i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i> , <i>Asplenium adiantum-nigrum</i> , <i>Blackstonia perfoliata</i> , <i>Blechnum spicant</i> , <i>Centaurea scabiosa</i> , <i>Centaurium erythraea</i> , <i>Daucus carota subsp. carota</i> , <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> , <i>Erigeron acris</i> , <i>Filago vulgaris</i> , <i>Fragaria vesca</i> , <i>Jacobaea erucifolia</i> , <i>Linum catharticum</i> , <i>Ophrys apifera</i> , <i>Ornithopus perpusillus</i> , <i>Orobanche minor</i> , <i>Reseda lutea</i> , <i>Senecio viscosus</i> , <i>Silene vulgaris</i> , <i>Trifolium arvense</i> , <i>Trifolium medium</i> , <i>Trifolium micranthum</i> , <i>Trifolium striatum</i> , <i>Vicia tetrasperma</i> .
Cultivation	<i>Chenopodium polyspermum</i> , <i>Orobanche minor</i> , <i>Stachys arvensis</i> , <i>Thlaspi arvense</i> , <i>Vicia tetrasperma</i> .

Ecological Connectivity

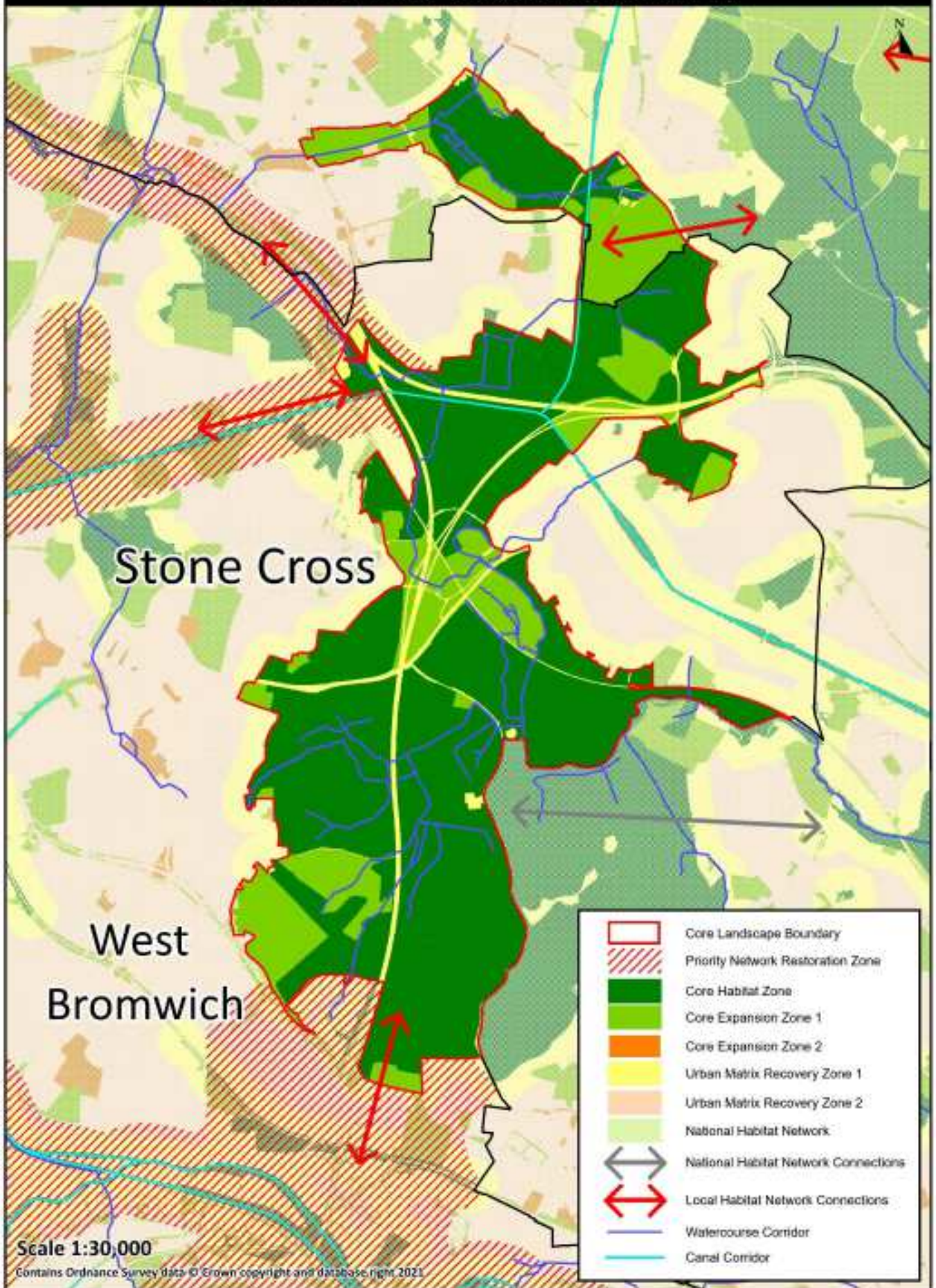
Local Habitat Network

Sandwell Valley links directly with Core Landscape 06 Park Lime Pits, Cuckoo's Dingle & Great Barr Hall which is located to the north. There are additional links to the Priority Network Restoration Zones M6 Motorway Corridor and Tame Valley Canal to the north-west, and Birmingham Canal to the south.

National Habitat Network

Sandwell Valley links to the national habitat network in Birmingham to the north-east.

CL07 - Sandwell Valley - Components & Connectivity



Ecological Sub-area Opportunities

Focus Habitats		
Habitat	Action	Measure
Hedgerows	Improve management of existing	Habitat in good condition
	Reinstate historic/grubbed-out	New habitat
	Restore through gapping up	Habitat in good condition
	Establish hedgerow trees	Habitat structure improved
Ponds	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Rivers	Restore hydromorphology (naturalise modified channels)	Improved ecological status
	Reduce artificial inputs	Improved chemical status
Eutrophic Standing Waters	Enhance marginal and emergent vegetation	Increased floral diversity and habitat structure improved
Lowland meadows	Enhance existing neutral grasslands	Increased floral diversity
	Create new species-rich neutral grasslands	Increased floral diversity and habitat structure improved
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Coppice	Habitat structure improved
	Create woodland edge	Habitat structure improved
	Diversify woody component	Habitat structure improved
	Diversify field-layer component of plantations	Increased floral diversity

Target Species	
Species/Species Group	Measure
Barn Owl	Confirmed recent records
Bats	Increased abundance of confirmed species
Breeding farmland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Breeding water & wetland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Breeding woodland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Brown Hare	Confirmed recent records
Brown Long-eared Bat	Confirmed recent records
Brown/Sea Trout	Confirmed recent records
European Otter	Increased signs, confirmed breeding population
European Water Vole	Confirmed recent records
Great Crested Newt	Increased abundance and number of breeding ponds
Hedgehog	Confirmed recent records
Woodland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Grassland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Heathland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Mires axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Open Water axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance

Geodiversity		
Site	Action	Measure
Sandwell Valley Country Park	Unknown	n/a

Connectivity Opportunities

Local Habitat Network

Connection	Action
Within Core Landscape CL07	Restoration of modified channel of the River Tame and tributaries.
	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation at sites including areas of public open space, golf courses, school grounds and sports fields.
	Plantation woodland enhancement.
	Creation of new ponds.
	Field boundary hedgerow recreation, restoration and creation.
	Planting of standard trees in parks, green spaces and school grounds.
Priority Network Restoration Zones (Tame Valley Canal and Birmingham Canal)	Increased marginal vegetation through the installation of coir rolls along hard banks.
	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation on undeveloped land including parks, green spaces, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Woodland enhancement and small-scale planting.
	Planting of standard trees (including fruit trees) along canal corridor.
Priority Network Restoration Zone (M6 Motorway Corridor)	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation on undeveloped land including parks, green spaces, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Woodland enhancement and small-scale planting in adjacent areas of open space.

National Habitat Network

Connection	Action
Birmingham section of Sandwell Valley (to south-east)	Restoration of modified channel of the River Tame and tributaries.
	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation at sites including areas of public open space, golf courses, school grounds and sports fields.
	Plantation woodland enhancement.
	Creation of new ponds.
	Field boundary hedgerow recreation, restoration and creation.
	Planting of standard trees in parks, green spaces and school grounds.

Information and Data Sources		
	Source	Date
Landuse	Ecological Evaluation of Birmingham and Black Country GIS data set, EcoRecord.	2021
Topography	OS Terrain 50 GIS data set, Ordnance Survey.	2017
Geology	British Geological Society 1:625,000 bedrock & superficial GIS web map services from BGS website: http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html	2021
	Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark sites names and location information https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/bcg/	2021
Soils	Soilscapes, Cranfield Soil & Agricultural Institute website: http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/	2021
Species and Habitats	EcoRecord species and habitat databases.	2021
Ecological Connectivity	EcoRecord, The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country (2021) <i>Draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map</i>	2021
	EcoRecord et al. (2021) <i>Midlands Heathland Heartland Lowland Heathland Nature Recovery Opportunity Mapping</i> .	2021
Historic Landscape Character Areas	Wolverhampton City Council (2010) <i>Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation</i> [data-set]. York: Archaeology Data Service [distributor] https://doi.org/10.5284/1000030	2010
Historic Environment Area Designations	Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study, Oxford Archaeology.	2019

[1] HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AREA DESIGNATIONS

The Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study has divided the Historic Environment Area Designations into four categories:

Archaeological Priority Areas (APA): sites with a high potential for archaeological remains of regional or national significance that have not been considered for designation as scheduled monuments, or where there is insufficient data available about the state or preservation of any remains to justify a designation. APAs are likely to have high archaeological and historic interest.

Areas of High Historic Townscape Value (AHHTV): areas where built heritage makes a significant contribution to local character and distinctiveness. The significance of AHHTVs is likely to be derived primarily from their architectural and historic interests. However, these areas may also have artistic and archaeological interests. Areas of High Historic Townscape Value are not limited to towns or cities, they also include villages, hamlets and areas of industry where the built heritage is considered to make a positive contribution to the historic environment of an area.

Designed Landscapes of High Historic Value (DLHHV): landscape areas that make an important contribution to local historic character but do not meet the criteria for inclusion on the national Register for Parks and Gardens. The significance of these areas is likely to arise from their historic, artistic and architectural interests, although such areas may also contain remains of archaeological interest.

Areas of High Historic Landscape Value (AHHLV): these recognise the quality of the wider landscape and their relative values. The significance of these areas arises from the natural and historic features contained within them (e.g. woodland, watercourses, hedgerows, and archaeological features). The significance of these areas is likely to be derived from their archaeological and historic interests.

[2] KEY HABITATS follows the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Broad & Priority Habitat definitions

This is a UK-habitat classification prepared by the UK Biodiversity Group that classifies all terrestrial and freshwater habitats in the UK into 37 broad habitat types. UK BAP Priority Habitats are a range of semi-natural habitat types that were identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action. The original Priority Habitat list was created between 1995 and 1999 and revised in 2007. The list of Priority Habitats has been used to help draw up statutory lists of habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The suite of habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity (formerly Priority Habitats) nest into the defined Broad Habitat Types.

[3] KEY SPECIES

Bird Indicators: Species listed under UK Biodiversity Indicator C5, Birds of the wider countryside and at sea (JNCC). The indicator shows changes in the breeding population sizes of common native birds of farmland and woodland and of freshwater and marine habitats in the UK.

Amphibians & Reptiles: All amphibian and reptile species native to the UK are included.

Mammals: Those protected by UK or EU law, included on the current list of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006 or amended), and those included on the latest B&BC LBAP list of Priority Habitats/Species.

Fish: Those protected by UK or EU law, included on the current list of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006 or amended), and those included on the latest B&BC LBAP list of Priority Habitats/Species.

Invertebrates: Pantheon Assemblage Types Analysis.

Flora (axiophytes): Those included on the Birmingham & the Black Country list of axiophytes (administered by EcoRecord) by four locally defined habitat types.

Ecological Sub-area Statement of Biodiversity Priorities – Technical Appendix

Sub-area name	Illey, Lapal and Hasbury	Sub-area ref.	CL13
Natural Character Area	Arden	NCA ref.	97
Local Authority Area	Dudley	Area km²	4.04

Ecological Sub-area Description

Overview

Illey, Lapal and Hasbury comprises an area of countryside in the south of the borough of Dudley and encompasses parts of the former parishes and townships of Lutley, Hasbury, Hunnington, Illey, Lapal and Northfield. The ecological sub-area forms part of a large rural landscape which predominantly lies in Worcestershire, with the western and southern boundaries (between Dudley and rural Bromsgrove) following the historic parish/township boundaries. To the north lie the modern suburbs of Halesowen, whilst to the east is the M5 motorway.

The landscape is comprised of an historic pattern of small irregular fields and woodlands with numerous unmodified headwaters of the River Stour, and contains extensive prehistoric, Roman and medieval remains. There are a large number of sites designated for their nature conservation value, including two ancient meadows designated as Illey Pastures Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Land Use

The land use is almost entirely agricultural, with numerous small pastures and permanent grasslands, and with some larger fields (frequently where historic field divisions have been removed) arable. Small dingle woodlands occupy a number of the shallow valleys of the numerous small watercourses. Settlements include approximately 15 farms (or former farms), the small village of Illey and the hamlet of historic Lapal.

There is a small athletics stadium, velodrome and tennis club in the north of the ecological sub-area off Manor Way.

Topography

Illey, Lapal and Hasbury has an undulating landscape, generally sloping from the highest elevations at the eastern, western and southern boundaries (at the highest an elevation of 180 metres) towards the centre and north of the ecological sub-area where both the River Stour and Illey Brook flow northwards into Core Landscape 11, Stour Valley, at an elevation of 120 metres.

Geology

Sedimentary bedrock of the Halesowen Formation - mudstone, siltstone and sandstone, formed approximately 308 to 310 million years ago. This is partially overlain with superficial deposits of head - clay, silt, sand and gravel formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period; alluvium - clay, silt, sand and gravel formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period; and diamicton till formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period.

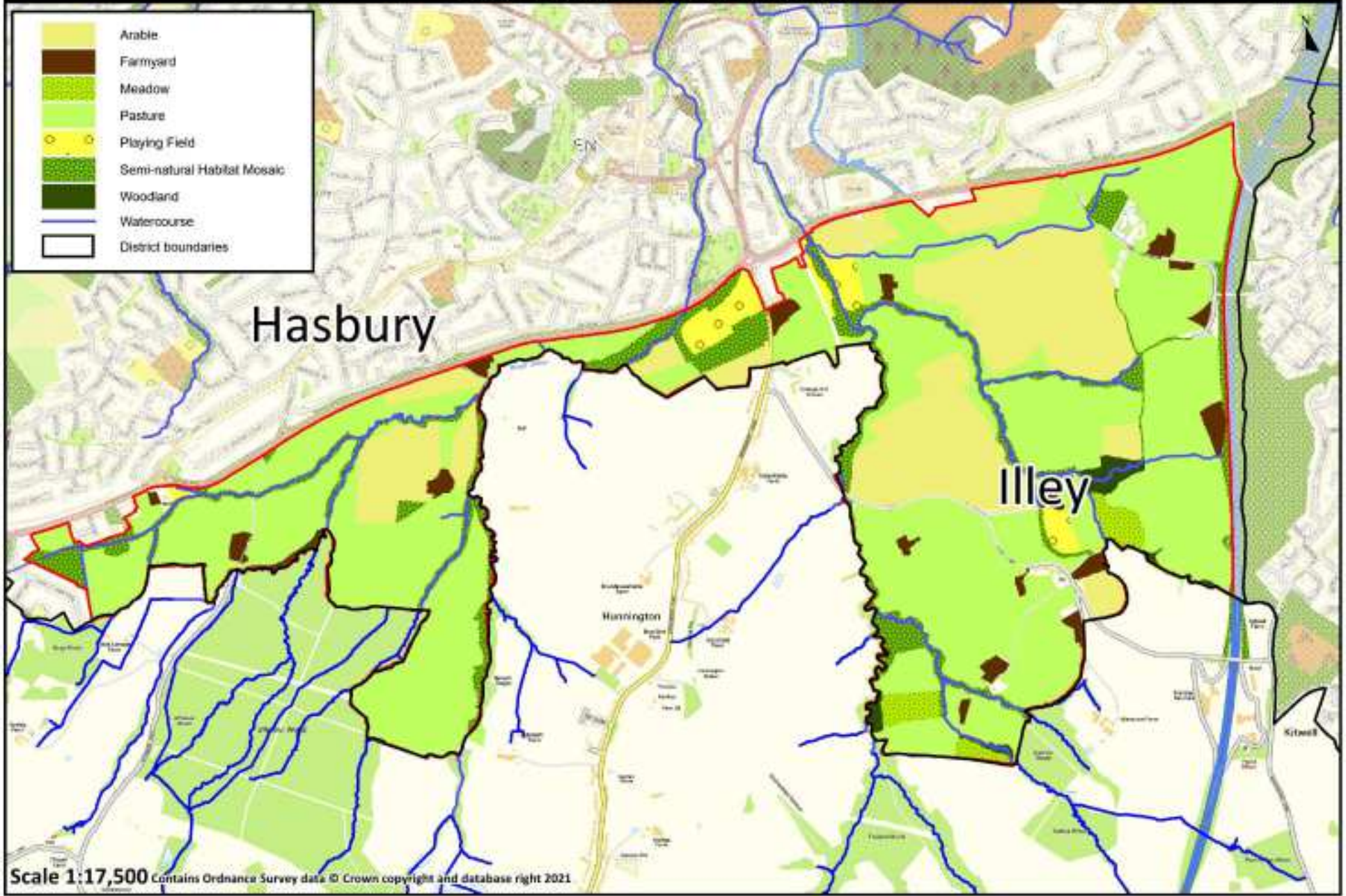
Geopark Sites

n/a

Soils

Predominantly slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils, with an approximately 1 km² area with freely draining slightly acid loamy soils in the eastern part of the ecological sub-area.

CL13 - Illey, Lapal and Hasbury - Land Use



Historic Landscape Character Areas

Reference	DY03	Name	Haley Fields & Illey
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The ecological sub-area is almost coterminous with HLC area DY03 Hayley Fields & Illey. The Character Area is dominated by scattered settlement and fields (90%) and is situated on an underlying geology of sandstone, mudstone and conglomerate. Settlement comprises small farmsteads and hamlets which predate the early 19th century. Historically the Character Area was dominated by agriculture associated with St Marys Abbey, which dates from the 13th century. The creation of granges within the area was part of the Abbey's efforts to develop its supply of agricultural goods. Many of the fields in the area contains traces of ridge and furrow associated with this early land use. While the area did not have an industrial phase it is crossed by the [disused] Dudley Number 2 Canal and a now disused railway line.

A small part of the ecological sub-area (c. 0.1 km²), including the athletics ground, lies within the large HLC area DY02 Halesowen.

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]

Reference	AHHLV 31	Name	Uffmoor ridge and furrow
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AHHLV 31 Uffmoor ridge and furrow is coterminous with the entire western section of the Illey, Lapal and Hasbury from Hayley Park Road to Grange Hill.

The AHHLV falls within the historic townships of Hasbury and Lutley and contains the head waters of the River Stour and is predominantly agricultural. The fields in this area contain large areas of surviving ridge and furrow earthworks enclosed by substantial hawthorn hedges. The landscape was enclosed by the late 19th century, and the field pattern has been subject to some modern alteration. An ancient parish boundary forms the eastern boundary of the area. The AHHLV contains possible medieval ridge and furrow, which provides a tangible link to the former land use in the area and can provide information about the medieval open field system in the area.

Heat crazed stones (potboilers) have been recorded in the area, possibly remnants of prehistoric burnt mounds, highlighting the archaeological potential of this area.

Visually the AHHLV is part of the rolling North Worcestershire landscape and it is set against the continued open landscape whose views are closed to the south and west by the North Worcestershire Hills. The southern boundary of the heritage area retains the ancient parish boundary line which is consistent with the Illey/Lapal heritage area southern boundary to the east. The AHHLV is traversed by public footpaths which follow an enclosed stream bed and wooded copse aligned in a north-south direction.

Reference	AHHLV 32	Name	Illey and Lapal
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AHHLV 32 Illey and Lapal is coterminous with almost the entire eastern section of the Illey, Lapal and Hasbury from Grange Hill to the M5 motorway.

The AHHLV is one of the largest in the borough and is inseparably part of the North Worcestershire Countryside and forms a foreground to the North Worcestershire hills which terminate views to the south and west. It is of considerable scenic value and contains a complex mix of landscape elements.

The AHHLV falls within the historic townships of Illey and Frankley and can be divided into three areas with the topography to the east and west of Lapal Lane South and north of Illey, falling to the west to Illey brook and then rising to the south to Illey Lane. The bowl between the A456 and Illey Lane is dominated by the monastic ruins and infirmary of the ruined 13th century St Mary's Abbey. The abbey system of fishponds and dams, although dry, are clearly visible to the east and south of the abbey precinct and provides evidence of medieval watercourse management. The abbey and surrounding land form a scheduled monument (NHLE 1009770) while the abbey ruins are a Grade I listed building. Halesowen Abbey is in the guardianship of the Secretary of State and English Heritage and a detailed Conservation Management Plan has been published for the site by Historic England. The area to the west of Lapal Lane, and north of Illey Lane is within the curtilage of Manor Farm. The scheduled abbey has a high level of archaeological interest, and could be directly impacted by unsympathetic development e.g. ground works. Outside of the scheduled area large blocks of masonry were recorded during the construction of Manor Way, these remains may be associated with the abbey and could suggest that the abbey landscape extends outside the scheduled area. Development within the surrounds of the scheduled monument could impact upon its setting.

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]

Ridge and furrow earthworks have also been recorded in the area to the east of Lapal Lane South associated with Green Lane which is a possible holloway. The ridge and furrow earthworks providing visible evidence of previous land management and agricultural practice. The field boundaries within the AHHLV preserve the route of old parish boundaries providing evidence of early administrative boundaries. There may be earthwork banks and ditches associated with the parish boundary preserved in these areas.

The AHHLV also derives archaeological interest from the site of the former Manor Colliery and the course of the former Lapal Canal and Lapal Tunnel. These remains could provide evidence about the industrial development within this area during the 19th century.

The AHHLV is inseparably part of the North Worcestershire Countryside and forms a foreground to the North Worcestershire hills which terminate views to the south and west. It is of considerable scenic value and contains a complex mix of landscape elements.

The AHHLV contains nationally rare archaeological remains associated with St Mary's Abbey. It also contains extensive prehistoric, Roman and medieval remains. Such remains are rare within the Black Country, as much of the area has been affected by ground disturbance associated with the high level of urbanisation and development that has occurred.

This AHHLV is particularly rare as it represents one of the few areas within the Black Country that has been less affected by the industrial and residential development of the area.

Reference	APA 42	Name	Lutley Lane Roman Villa
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The APA contains the suggested site of Lutley Lane Roman Villa. The site has been identified as a cropmark visible upon aerial photographs. While the presence of archaeological remains in this area has yet to be ground truthed by excavation, the morphology of the APA suggest that the archaeological remains of a Roman villa site are present.

There is limited evidence of Roman activity within Dudley, probably due to later industrial activity and residential development. The APA is thus considered to contain a regionally rare example of archaeological remains associated with a Roman rural settlement. These remains could inform understanding of Roman rural settlements and land use in the area.

Unsympathetic development i.e. groundworks would detrimentally affect archaeological remains within the APA.

Reference	APA 176	Name	Illey Township
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The APA contains the site of the historic settlement of Illey in the parish of Halesowen. The place-name is derived from two elements Hilla and Leah. These elements are Anglo-Saxon and refer to a woodland estate belonging to a man called Hilla. The earliest reference to Illey is in the Manor Court Book in 1270 (Hemmingway 2005). There were two open fields in the high land in the centre of the township, Hilley Field to the north of main road between Halesowen and Fingal Field and Fingall Field to the south of the road. The open fields were surrounded by a large number of meadows aligned on the brooks (ibid). The settlement dates back to at least the early post-medieval period, and is first shown on the 1845 Tithe map of the area. The buildings within the APA date to the 19th and 20th century, however the APA is considered to have the potential to contain below ground archaeological remains associated with the earlier settlement. The site of a medieval tithe barn (HER 4325) is recorded in the southern part of the APA, the APA has the potential to contain archaeological remains associated with the barn, further contributing to the archaeological interest of the APA.

Reference	APA 203	Name	Dudley No. 2 Canal
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The APA contains the line of the Dudley No. 2 Canal, which ran from Bumble Hole to the Lapal Tunnel. The Canal was built in 1798. The APA contains the Lapal Tunnel which is first shown on a map of Lapal dated to 1841. The APA has been included as the area contains below ground archaeological remains associated with the 18th century canal.

Waterbody Catchments			
River Basin District	Severn	Management Catchment	Severn Middle Worcestershire
Waterbody Catchment	Overall Classification	Ecological	Chemical
Stour (Worcs) source to confluence with Smestow Brook	Poor (2019)	Poor (2019)	Fail (2019)

Key Habitats [2]			
Broad Habitat Type	Arable and horticulture	Priority Habitat	
A number of the larger fields are arable, with some field boundaries within these having been removed since the Ordnance Survey County Series mapping of the 1880s. No Priority Habitat field margins have been recorded.			
Broad Habitat Type	Boundary & Linear Features	Priority Habitat	Hedgerows
<p>There are numerous field boundary hedgerows throughout the ecological sub-area associated with the mostly small irregularly-shaped fields and along trackways. These frequently sit atop bank and ditch systems and contain mature Pedunculate Oak standards. The hedgerows are predominantly Hawthorn-dominated and support a diverse range of tree and shrub species, as well as a diverse field-layer of woodland-associated species.</p> <p>Only a small proportion of the hedgerows have been assessed against the Local Wildlife Sites selection criteria and of these a number have been selected as SLINCs.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Rivers and Streams	Priority Habitat	Rivers
<p>Numerous small headwaters rise within or just outside the ecological sub-area in Worcestershire. These flow northwards to form the River Stour and Illey Brook (itself a tributary of the Stour). The watercourses are predominantly unmodified and support a diversity of features associated with the processes of erosion and deposition. Most of the channels are lined by trees and some dingle woodlands where the watercourse has incised the soft sedimentary bedrock.</p> <p>This part of the waterbody catchment is ecologically isolated from the wider downstream catchment by urban features including man-made in-channel structures and high pollution levels.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Standing Open Water and Canals	Priority Habitat	Ponds
<p>There are a small number of garden and field ponds in the ecological sub-area, including one in Illey Pastures SSSI described in the citation as a small basin mire dominated by Bog Mosses with Bog Pondweed and marginal species such as Water-plantain, Branched Bur-reed and Water Forget-me-not.</p> <p>In the west of the sub-area are Tack Farm Ponds SLINC described as two farm ponds with relatively diverse flora and forb rich adjacent neutral grassland.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Neutral Grassland	Priority Habitat	Lowland Meadows
<p>In the south of the ecological sub-area Illey Pastures SSSI consists of two fields of species-rich unimproved neutral grassland. The grassland has developed on ridge and furrow of loamy soils with subsoils where the drainage is partially impeded. The sward contains an abundance of forbs such as Field Scabious, Betony, Dyer's Greenweed and Common Spotted-orchid.</p> <p>There are also other less diverse Lowland Meadows in the sub-area.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Neutral Grassland	Priority Habitat	
<p>Many of the smaller fields within the ecological sub-area are pastures that are variously cattle, sheep and horse grazed. Some of these have developed on ridge and furrow and are of some age, whereas others have been cultivated in recent decades. There are no pastures that are designated for their nature conservation value.</p>			

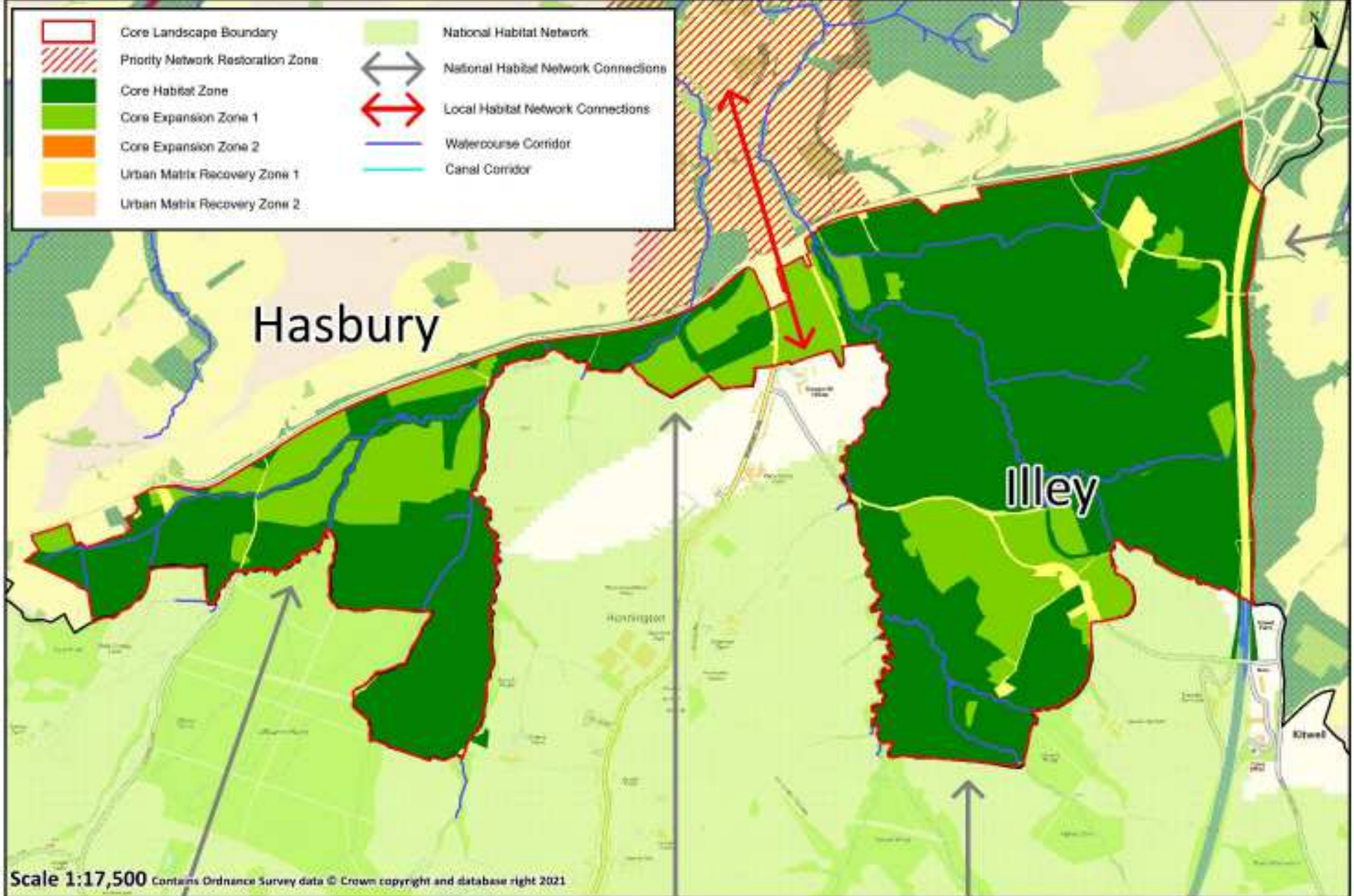
Broad Habitat Type	Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Priority Habitat	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
<p>There are a number of small dingle woodlands occupying the valleys of the watercourses which are of some age and likely to be ancient (woodland since at least AD 1600). These are variously designated as SINC or SLINC and include Cooper's Wood, Paddock Wood, Manor Abbey Woodland and Kitswell Dingle. The woodlands support a diverse woody and field-layer flora associated with ancient woodlands.</p> <p>Narrow strips of woodland/trees have colonised the banks of most of the ecological sub-area's watercourses and these areas frequently support a similarly diverse woodland flora.</p>			

Key Species [3]	
Bird indicators	
Farmland	Eurasian Skylark, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Jackdaw, Kestrel, Linnet, Stock Dove, Woodpigeon, Yellowhammer.
Woodland	Blackbird, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Dunnock, Eurasian Blackcap, Eurasian Blue Tit, Eurasian Nuthatch, Eurasian Wren, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Jay, Long-tailed Tit, Robin, Song Thrush, Tawny Owl, Treecreeper.
Water & Wetland	Mallard
Other	Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Common House Martin, Eurasian Magpie, House Sparrow, Mistle Thrush, Northern Raven, Swallow, Whinchat.
Amphibians & Reptiles	
Amphibians	Common Frog.
Reptiles	none
Mammals	
Bats	Brown Long-eared Bat, Common Pipistrelle, Nathusius's Pipistrelle, Natterer's Bat, Noctule Bat, Soprano Pipistrelle.
Other	Eurasian Badger, European Otter, European Water Vole, West European Hedgehog.
Fish	
Bony Fish	Brown Trout
Jawless Fish	none
Invertebrates	
Assemblage type	
Flora (axiophytes)	
Woodland	<i>Adoxa moschatellina, Ajuga reptans, Allium ursinum, Anemone nemorosa, Angelica sylvestris, Athyrium filix-femina, Brachypodium sylvaticum, Bromopsis ramosa, Cardamine amara, Carex remota, Carex sylvatica, Chrysosplenium oppositifolium, Deschampsia flexuosa, Dioscorea communis, Dryopteris affinis, Epipactis helleborine, Equisetum telmateia, Festuca gigantea, Filipendula ulmaria, Fragaria vesca, Galium odoratum, Hordelymus europaeus, Hypericum pulchrum, Lamiastrum galeobdolon subsp. montanum, Lathraea squamaria, Lysimachia nemorum, Lysimachia vulgaris, Malus sylvestris, Melica uniflora, Mercurialis perennis, Miliium effusum, Oxalis acetosella, Poa nemoralis, Polystichum aculeatum, Polystichum setiferum, Sanicula europaea, Stellaria holostea, Taraxacum nordstedtii, Valeriana officinalis, Veronica montana, Viola reichenbachiana.</i>
Grassland	<i>Achillea ptarmica, Agrimonia eupatoria, Ajuga reptans, Alchemilla filicaulis subsp. vestita, Brachypodium sylvaticum, Briza media, Campanula rotundifolia, Carex caryophyllea, Centaurium erythraea, Cirsium palustre, Dactylorhiza fuchsii, Danthonia decumbens, Deschampsia flexuosa, Filipendula ulmaria, Fragaria vesca, Galium mollugo subsp. erectum, Genista tinctoria, Hypericum pulchrum, Lathyrus linifolius, Leontodon hispidus, Linum catharticum, Lotus pedunculatus, Persicaria bistorta, Phleum bertolonii, Pimpinella saxifraga, Potentilla anglica, Potentilla erecta, Potentilla sterilis, Rhinanthus minor, Sanguisorba officinalis, Serratula tinctoria, Silaum silaus, Stachys officinalis, Stellaria holostea, Succisa pratensis, Trifolium medium, Veronica officinalis.</i>

Heathland	<i>Campanula rotundifolia, Carex nigra, Danthonia decumbens, Deschampsia flexuosa, Potentilla erecta, Veronica officinalis.</i>
Mires	<i>Achillea ptarmica, Alchemilla filicaulis subsp. vestita, Angelica sylvestris, Athyrium filix-femina, Briza media, Cardamine amara, Carex nigra, Carex panicea, Cirsium palustre, Dactylorhiza fuchsii, Dryopteris carthusiana, Eleocharis palustris, Epilobium palustre, Equisetum fluviatile, Filipendula ulmaria, Galium palustre, Glyceria declinata, Glyceria notata, Hypericum tetrapterum, Jacobaea aquatica, Juncus acutiflorus, Lotus pedunculatus, Lysimachia vulgaris, Potamogeton polygonifolius, Ranunculus flammula, Stachys palustris, Stellaria alsine, Succisa pratensis, Valeriana officinalis, Veronica beccabunga, Veronica scutellata.</i>
Open Water	<i>Eleocharis palustris, Equisetum fluviatile, Galium palustre, Glyceria notata, Potamogeton polygonifolius, Schoenoplectus lacustris, Veronica scutellata.</i>
Post-industrial (water-stressed)	<i>Agrimonia eupatoria, Centaurium erythraea, Deschampsia flexuosa, Fragaria vesca, Jacobaea erucifolia, Linum catharticum, Trifolium medium, Vicia tetrasperma.</i>
Cultivation	<i>Vicia tetrasperma.</i>

Ecological Connectivity	
Local Habitat Network	
There is a direct link from the ecological sub-area to Core Landscape 11 Stour Valley via the corridors of the River Stour and Illey Brook.	
National Habitat Network	
Illey, Lapal and Hasbury forms part of a wider rural landscape that is predominantly in Worcestershire and therefore links directly with the National Habitat Network. This landscape includes a similar pattern of small irregular-shaped grassland fields with lesser amounts of arable, and numerous small watercourses and ancient woodlands including Uffmoor Wood and Twiland Wood.	

CL13 - Illey, Lapal and Hasbury - Components & Connectivity



Ecological Sub-area Opportunities

Focus Habitats		
Habitat	Action	Measure
Hedgerows	Improve management of existing	Habitat in good condition
	Restore through gapping up	Habitat in good condition
	Reinstate lost field-boundary hedgerows	New habitat
	Establish hedgerow trees	Habitat structure improved
Ponds	Restore existing	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Rivers	Restore hydromorphology (naturalise modified channels) downstream (CL11)	Improved ecological status
	Reduce artificial inputs	Improved chemical status
	Improve soil management	Reduced silt inputs to watercourses
Lowland meadows	Enhance existing neutral grasslands	Increased floral diversity
	Create new species-rich neutral grasslands	Increased floral diversity and habitat structure improved
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Coppice	Habitat structure improved
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites

Target Species	
Species/Species Group	Measure
Breeding farmland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Breeding woodland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Breeding water & wetland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Dipper	Confirmed recent records
Barn Owl	Confirmed recent records
Brown Hare	Confirmed recent records
Hedgehog	Confirmed recent records
Bats	Increased abundance of confirmed species
European Otter	Increased signs
European Water Vole	Confirmed recent records
Grassland axiophytes	Increased abundance
Woodland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance

Geodiversity		
Site	Action	Measure
n/a		

Connectivity Opportunities	
Local Habitat Network	
Connection	Action
Within Core Landscape CL13	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation.
	Creation of new ponds.
	Field boundary hedgerow restoration and creation.
Core Landscape CL11 Stour Valley	Restoration of modified channel and removal/mitigation of artificial in-channel barriers.
National Habitat Network	
Connection	Action
With wider rural landscape (Worcestershire)	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation.
	Creation of new ponds.
	Field boundary hedgerow restoration and creation.

Information and Data Sources		
	Source	Date
Landuse	Ecological Evaluation of Birmingham and Black Country GIS data set, EcoRecord.	2021
Topography	OS Terrain 50 GIS data set, Ordnance Survey.	2017
Geology	British Geological Society 1:625,000 bedrock & superficial GIS web map services from BGS website: http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html	2021
	Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark sites names and location information https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/bcg/	2021
Soils	Soilscapes, Cranfield Soil & Agricultural Institute website: http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/	2021
Species and Habitats	EcoRecord species and habitat databases.	2021
Ecological Connectivity	EcoRecord, The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country (2021) <i>Draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map</i>	2021
	EcoRecord et al. (2021) <i>Midlands Heathland Heartland Lowland Heathland Nature Recovery Opportunity Mapping</i> .	2021
Historic Landscape Character Areas	Wolverhampton City Council (2010) <i>Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation</i> [data-set]. York: Archaeology Data Service [distributor] https://doi.org/10.5284/1000030	2010
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[1] HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AREA DESIGNATIONS

The Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study has divided the Historic Environment Area Designations into four categories:

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This is a UK-habitat classification prepared by the UK Biodiversity Group that classifies all terrestrial and freshwater habitats in the UK into 37 broad habitat types. UK BAP Priority Habitats are a range of semi-natural habitat types that were identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action. The original Priority Habitat list was created between 1995 and 1999 and revised in 2007. The list of Priority Habitats has been used to help draw up statutory lists of habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The suite of habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity (formerly Priority Habitats) nest into the defined Broad Habitat Types.

[3] KEY SPECIES

Bird Indicators: Species listed under UK Biodiversity Indicator C5, Birds of the wider countryside and at sea (JNCC). The indicator shows changes in the breeding population sizes of common native birds of farmland and woodland and of freshwater and marine habitats in the UK.

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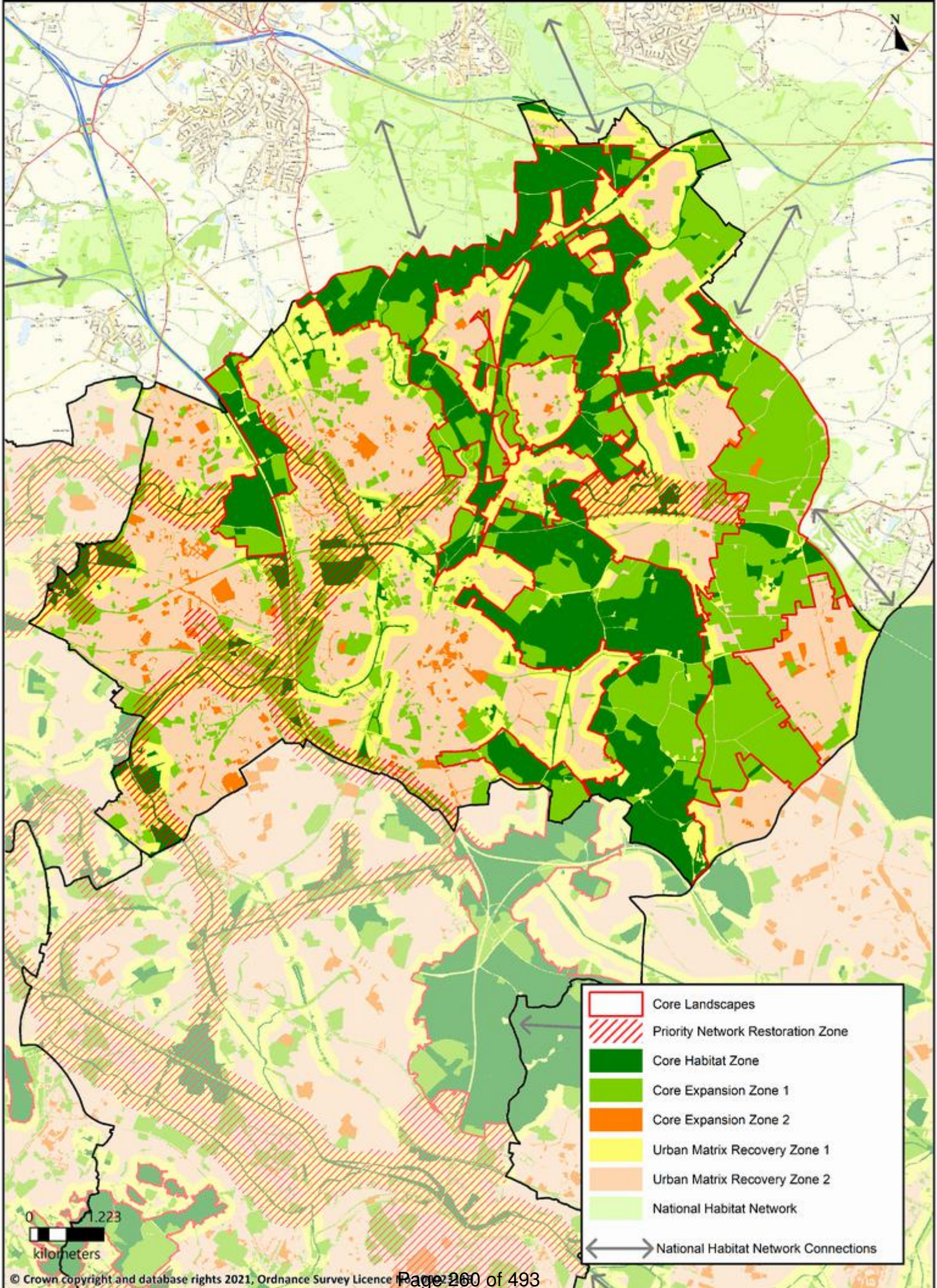
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Invertebrates: Pantheon Assemblage Types Analysis.

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Emerging Walsall Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map - April 2021



Ecological Sub-area Statement of Biodiversity Priorities – Technical Appendix

Sub-area name	Rough Wood Chase & Sneyd Reservoir	Sub-area ref.	CL03
Natural Character Area	Cannock Chase and Cank Wood	NCA ref.	67
Local Authority Area	Walsall	Area km²	2.08

Ecological Sub-area Description

Overview

Rough Wood Chase & Sneyd Reservoir was significantly impacted by coal mining in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and the landscape today is dominated by areas of open space that have developed spontaneously or have been landscaped on former collieries. A significant feature of the ecological sub-area is the Wyrley and Essington Canal corridor and the associated Sneyd Reservoir (canal feeder) which bisects the area.

Historic mapping depicts that prior to industrialisation the area comprised a complex of small fields, however, very little of this landscape remains. Areas of Rough Wood in the south of the ecological sub-area are designated by Natural England as Ancient Semi-natural Woodland, however, how much of this escaped the impact of industrial activity is not clear.

Semi-natural habitats within the ecological sub-area include numerous subsidence pools, mature woodland, scrub and rough grassland.

Land Use

Just under 50% of the ecological sub-area is public open space designated as Rough Wood Chase Local Nature Reserve. This is comprised of woodland, scrub, grassland and ponds, and includes Sneyd Reservoir in the north. This area is well accessed for recreation by the local community.

In the north of the ecological sub-area are a community centre (former secondary school) and primary school with associated sports grounds, areas of planted woodland, scrub, rough grassland and a large artificial pool. The remainder of the ecological sub-area comprises playing fields, school grounds and the Wyrley and Essington Canal corridor.

Topography

Rough Wood Chase & Sneyd Reservoir is naturally relatively level with elevations ranging from 130 to 150 metres. The topography of the area has been modified by industrial activity including mining.

Geology

The entire ecological sub-area is located on bedrock of sedimentary Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation, Mudstone, siltstone and sandstone formed between 318 and 309.5 million years ago during the Carboniferous period, overlain with superficial deposits of Devensian diamicton till formed between 116 and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period.

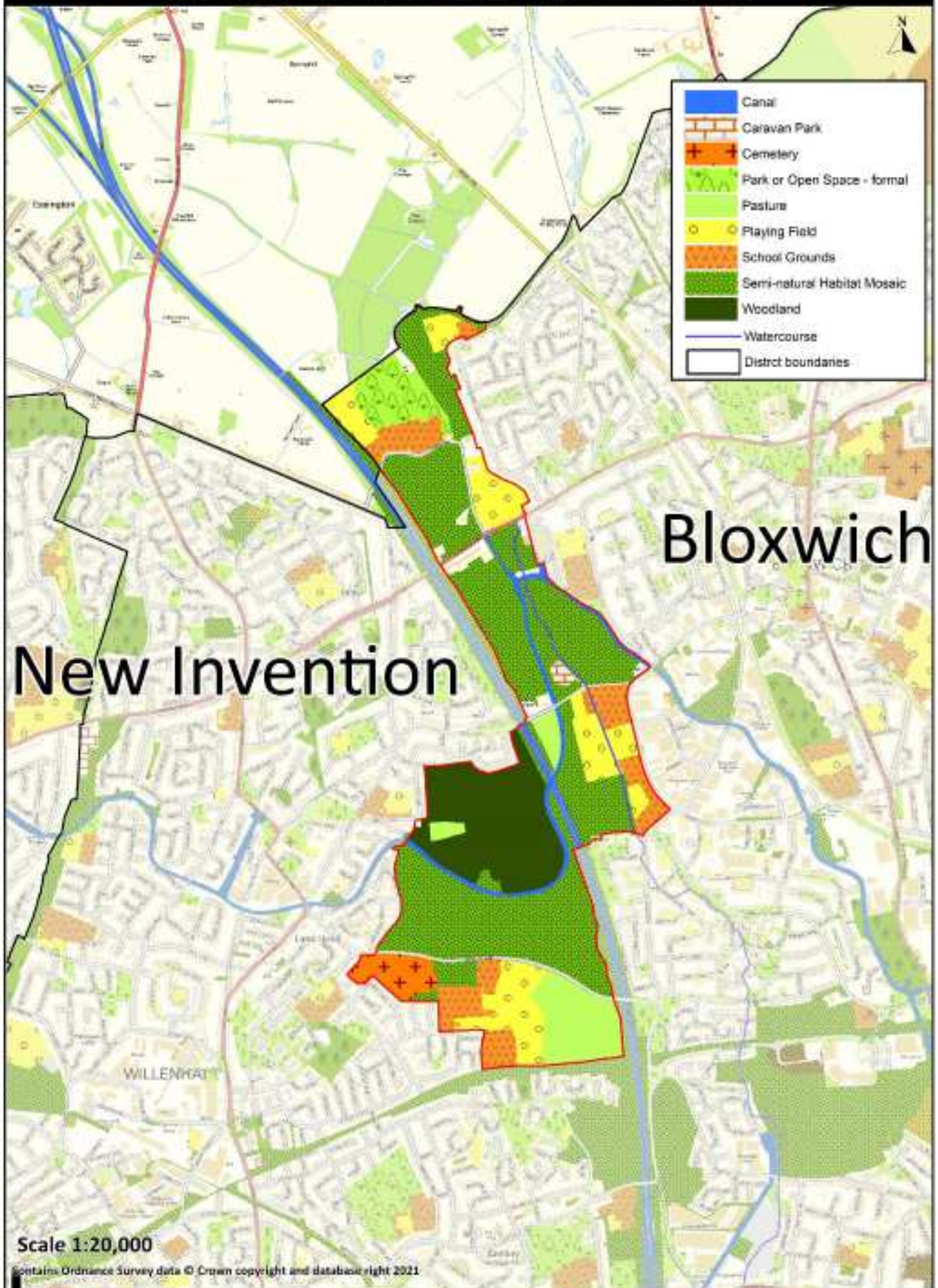
Geopark Sites

n/a

Soils

In the northern section of the ecological sub-area the soils are restored, mostly from quarry and opencast spoil, loamy, and with low to moderate fertility and variable drainage. In the southern section the soils are slowly permeable, seasonally wet and slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey, with moderate fertility and impeded drainage.

CL03 Rough Wood Chase & Sneyd Reservoir – Land Use



Historic Landscape Character Areas

Reference	WL07	Name	Bentley
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The entire ecological sub-area is within WL07 Bentley. The Character Area lies in the north-west of the Walsall borough. It is dominated by areas of modern housing and is situated almost wholly on the coalfield. Few pre-19th century houses survive in the borough, and these are concentrated in Bescot and the Birchills area of Walsall. Further 18th and 19th century houses survive in the historic settlement cores of the area. There are a number of important recreation areas within the Character Area, including the Rough Wood Country Park, which was established in the mid/late 20th century from reclaimed coal extraction sites.

The medieval character of the area was a combination of open field and common (which was part of Cannock Forest) with small medieval settlements at Bescot and Bentley. By the late 19th century the area was dominated by coal mining and collieries, resulting in the expansion of the 17th- and 18th-century settlements of Lane Head, New Invention and Short Heath.

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]

Reference	AHHTV 127	Name	Wyrley and Essington Canal
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The AHHTV contains the Wyrley and Essington Canal which was built along the northern boundary of Pelsall in 1794 to carry coal and other raw materials necessary to the development of industry in the Black Country. The canal was built following the 1790s Act authorising a canal from Wolverhampton to the collieries and Wyrley Bank and Essington. The canal was built using the early contour construction method, where by the canal followed the natural contours of the landscape. However, land subsidence caused by the surrounding mining activity and continual repair work along the canal has caused some parts of the present-day canal to run on high embankments.

The AHHTV has the potential to contain non-designated historically important buildings such as locks, canal bridges and industrial buildings associated with the early usage of the canal. These nationally and locally important buildings are directly associated with the creation and development of the canal and make a positive contribution to the quality of the historic environment.

Reference	AHHLV 31	Name	Rough Wood Country Park
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The AHHLV contains a number of mines and shafts associated with the Rough Wood Colliery. The workings were situated to the west and east of the canal, to the east of Rough Wood. The site of a cluster of buildings thought to be associated with the mine workings is recorded to the south of the Canal. The Wyrley and Essington Canal (built 1794) passes through the AHHLV and was directly associated with the coal mining in this area. The area to the north contains the 18th/early 19th century Sneyd Reservoir, which supplied water to the canal.

The AHHLV contains two areas of semi-natural ancient woodland, Rough Wood and Rough Wood South. The woodland has the potential to contain well-preserved archaeological remains (although none are currently known), and may contain features associated with medieval and post-medieval woodland management. Ancient Woodlands represent surviving patches of the historic landscape that date back to the early post-medieval period.

Waterbody Catchments

River Basin District	Humber	Management Catchment	Tame Anker and Mease
Waterbody Catchment	Overall Classification	Ecological	Chemical
Sneyd Brook from Source to Tame	Bad (2019)	Bad (2019)	Fail (2019)

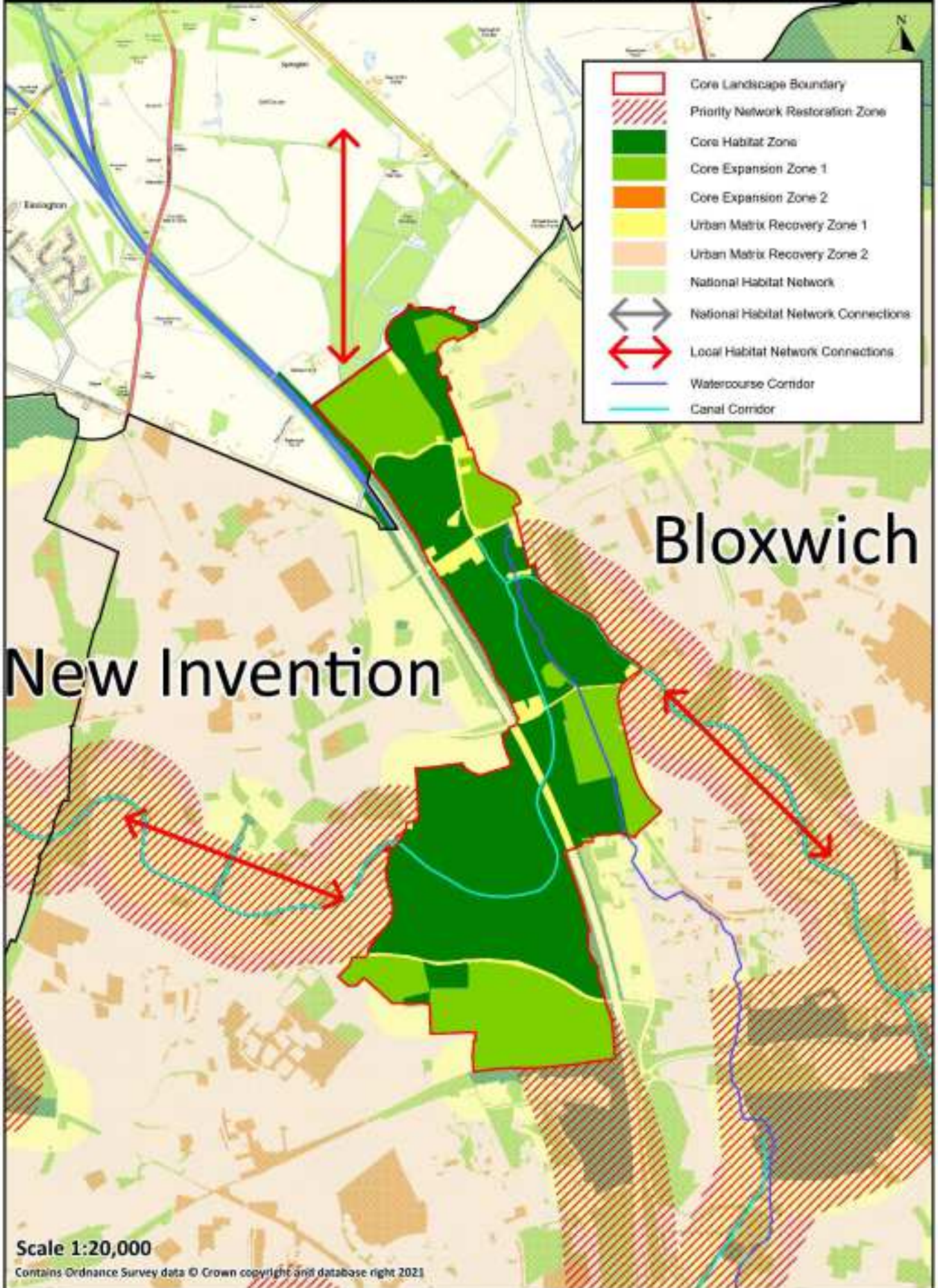
Key Habitats [2]			
Broad Habitat Type	Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Priority Habitat	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
<p>Areas of Rough Wood in the south of the ecological sub-area are designated by Natural England as Ancient Semi-natural Woodland. Historic mapping and habitat descriptions of the area suggest, however, that much of this area was subject to industrial activity and it is not clear how much of the area meets the definition of ASNW. The mature woodland that does remain on site is dominated by Oak with frequent Birch and Hawthorn, with some Guelder-rose, Alder Buckthorn and Wild Privet occur in the shrub layer.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Priority Habitat	
<p>Scrub and young woodland cover have increased significantly since the middle of the 20th century through both planting (in Rough Wood Chase) and natural succession. The composition and structure of these habitats is not known.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Acid Grassland	Priority Habitat	Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
<p>There are thought to be areas of remnant acid grassland within Rough Wood Chase, the extent and condition of which is not known.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Neutral Grassland	Priority Habitat	
<p>Much of the semi-natural grassland habitats in the ecological sub-area are unmanaged, tussocky and rank, and are dominated by species that ubiquitous in habitats of this type. The habitat type has decreased significantly in recent decades through woodland planting and natural succession.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Dwarf Shrub Heath	Priority Habitat	Lowland Heathland
<p>There are records of small areas of lowland heathland at Rough Wood Chase, the extent and condition of which is not known.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Standing Open Water and Canals	Priority Habitat	Ponds
<p>There are numerous mining subsidence pools throughout the ecological sub-area that support important amphibian populations. The condition and number of waterbodies has, however, apparently reduced over recent decades through seral succession to reedswamp and scrub/woodland.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Standing Open Water and Canals	Priority Habitat	Eutrophic Standing Waters
<p>In the north of the ecological sub-area is a small canal feeder reservoir (Sneyd Reservoir) that is entirely surrounded by scrub/woodland but retains a large area of open water. To the north of this there is more recent artificial pool which is used for recreational activities.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Standing Open Water and Canals	Priority Habitat	
<p>A section of the Wyrley & Essington Canal bisects the ecological sub-area. The canal is fed by Chasewater reservoir and is of low chemical and nutrient status, consequently being of high ecological value in the context of the Black Country canal network. The canal supports a diverse assemblage of aquatic vegetation, as well of populations of coarse fish, freshwater invertebrates and wetland birds.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Rivers and Streams	Priority Habitat	Rivers
<p>The Sneyd Brook flows north-south through the ecological sub-area. This is situated either within a highly modified channel or culverted along the entire section within the ecological sub-area and is classified as Bad status by the Environment Agency.</p>			

Key Species [3]	
Bird indicators	
Farmland	Common Reed Bunting, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Kestrel, Rook, Starling, Stock Dove, Tree Sparrow, Western Yellow Wagtail, Woodpigeon.
Woodland	Blackbird, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Common Chaffinch, Dunnock, Eurasian Blackcap, Eurasian Blue Tit, Eurasian Bullfinch, Eurasian Wren, European Green Woodpecker, Goldcrest, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Jay, Long-tailed Tit, Robin, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Willow Tit.
Water & Wetland	Common Reed Bunting, Eurasian Coot, Great Crested Grebe, Grey Heron, Grey Wagtail, Kingfisher, Little Grebe, Mallard, Moorhen, Mute Swan, Western Yellow Wagtail.
Other	Black-headed Gull, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Collared Dove, Common House Martin, Eurasian Magpie, House Sparrow, Meadow Pipit, Mistle Thrush, Northern Raven, Pied Wagtail, Swallow.
Amphibians & Reptiles	
Amphibians	Common Frog, Great Crested Newt, Smooth Newt
Reptiles	Common Lizard
Mammals	
Bats	Brown Long-eared Bat, Common Pipistrelle, Daubenton's Bat, Noctule Bat, Soprano Pipistrelle, Whiskered/Brandt's Bat
Other	Eurasian Badger, European Otter, European Water Vole, West European Hedgehog
Fish	
Bony Fish	none
Jawless Fish	none
Invertebrates	
Assemblage type	
Flora (axiophytes)	
Woodland	<i>Allium ursinum, Angelica sylvestris, Blechnum spicant, Brachypodium sylvaticum, Caltha palustris, Deschampsia flexuosa, Dryopteris affinis, Equisetum sylvaticum, Frangula alnus, Galium odoratum, Luzula pilosa, Malus sylvestris, Mercurialis perennis, Miliium effusum, Molinia caerulea, Populus nigra subsp. betulifolia, Stellaria holostea, Torilis japonica.</i>
Grassland	<i>Achillea ptarmica, Agrimonia eupatoria, Agrostis canina, Blechnum spicant, Brachypodium sylvaticum, Caltha palustris, Centaurium erythraea, Cirsium palustre, Dactylorhiza fuchsii, Dactylorhiza praetermissa, Daucus carota subsp. carota, Deschampsia flexuosa, Equisetum sylvaticum, Euphrasia, Euphrasia officinalis agg., Leontodon hispidus, Lotus pedunculatus, Nardus stricta, Odontites vernus, Odontites vernus subsp. serotinus, Ononis repens, Parentucellia viscosa, Phleum bertolonii, Potentilla anglica, Potentilla erecta, Sanguisorba officinalis, Silene flos-cuculi, Stellaria holostea, Trifolium medium.</i>
Heathland	<i>Agrostis canina, Blechnum spicant, Calluna vulgaris, Carex nigra, Deschampsia flexuosa, Luzula multiflora, Luzula multiflora subsp. congesta, Molinia caerulea, Nardus stricta, Potentilla erecta, Vaccinium myrtillus.</i>
Mires	<i>Achillea ptarmica, Agrostis canina, Angelica sylvestris, Apium inundatum, Calamagrostis epigejos, Caltha palustris, Carex acutiformis, Carex nigra, Carex panicea, Cirsium palustre, Dactylorhiza fuchsii, Dactylorhiza praetermissa, Eleocharis palustris, Equisetum fluviatile, Equisetum palustre, Galium palustre, Galium palustre subsp. palustre, Glyceria notata, Hydrocotyle vulgaris, Hypericum tetrapterum, Jacobaea aquatica, Lotus pedunculatus, Luzula multiflora, Luzula multiflora subsp. congesta, Molinia caerulea, Pulicaria dysenterica, Ranunculus aquatilis, Ranunculus circinatus, Ranunculus flammula, Silene flos-cuculi, Sparganium emersum, Veronica beccabunga.</i>
Open Water	<i>Apium inundatum, Butomus umbellatus, Carex acutiformis, Eleocharis palustris, Equisetum fluviatile, Galium palustre, Galium palustre subsp. palustre, Glyceria notata, Potamogeton perfoliatus, Potamogeton pusillus, Ranunculus aquatilis, Ranunculus circinatus, Sagittaria sagittifolia, Schoenoplectus lacustris.</i>

Post-industrial (water-stressed)	<i>Agrimonia eupatoria, Asplenium adiantum-nigrum, Blechnum spicant, Centaurium erythraea, Chaenorhinum minus, Clematis vitalba, Daucus carota subsp. carota, Deschampsia flexuosa, Erigeron acris, Jacobaea erucifolia, Ophrys apifera, Parentucellia viscosa, Poa compressa, Reseda lutea, Silene vulgaris, Trifolium medium.</i>
Cultivation	None

Ecological Connectivity
Local Habitat Network
There are links from the ecological sub-area to the Priority Network Restoration Zones Wyrley & Essington Canal and M6 Motorway Corridor. These link Rough Wood Chase & Sneyd Reservoir to Core Landscapes CL01 Smestow Valley & Tettenhall Ridge, CL04 Brownhills Common and Pelsall and CL07 Sandwell Valley.
National Habitat Network
The north of the ecological sub-area links directly with the South Staffordshire countryside but not the National Habitat Network as defined by Natural England.

CL03 - Rough Wood Chase & Sneyd Reservoir - Components & Connectivity



Ecological Sub-area Opportunities

Focus Habitats		
Habitat	Action	Measure
Ponds	Restore existing	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Rivers	Restore hydromorphology (naturalise modified channels)	Improved ecological status
	Reduce artificial inputs	Improved chemical status
Eutrophic Standing Waters	Enhance marginal and emergent vegetation	Increased floral diversity and habitat structure improved
	Reduce artificial inputs	Improved chemical status
Canals	Identify and reduce artificial inputs	Improved chemical status
Lowland meadows	Enhance existing neutral grasslands	Increased floral diversity
	Create new species-rich neutral grasslands	Increased floral diversity and habitat structure improved
Lowland Heathland	Confirmed extent and improve habitat at existing sites	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Lowland dry acid grassland	Confirmed extent and improve habitat at existing sites	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Coppice	Habitat structure improved
	Create woodland edge	Habitat structure improved
	Diversify woody component	Habitat structure improved
	Diversify field-layer component of plantations	Increased floral diversity

Target Species	
Species/Species Group	Measure
Bats	Increased abundance of confirmed species
Breeding farmland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Breeding water & wetland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Breeding woodland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
European Otter	Increased signs, confirmed breeding population
European Water Vole	Confirmed recent records
Great Crested Newt	Increased abundance and number of breeding ponds
Hedgehog	Confirmed recent records
Woodland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Grassland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Mires axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Open Water axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance

Geodiversity		
Site	Action	Measure
n/a		

Connectivity Opportunities	
Local Habitat Network	
Connection	Action
Within Core Landscape CL03	Restoration of modified channel of the Sneyd Brook.
	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation at sites including areas of public open space, school grounds and sports fields.
	Plantation woodland enhancement.
	Creation of new ponds.
	Planting of standard trees in parks, green spaces and school grounds.
Connection	Action
Priority Network Restoration Zone (M6 Motorway Corridor)	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation on undeveloped land including parks, green spaces, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Woodland enhancement and small-scale planting in adjacent areas of open space.

Information and Data Sources		
	Source	Date
Landuse	Ecological Evaluation of Birmingham and Black Country GIS data set, EcoRecord.	2021
Topography	OS Terrain 50 GIS data set, Ordnance Survey.	2017
Geology	British Geological Society 1:625,000 bedrock & superficial GIS web map services from BGS website: http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html	2021
	Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark sites names and location information https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/bcg/	2021
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Invertebrates: Pantheon Assemblage Types Analysis.

Flora (axiophytes): Those included on the Birmingham & the Black Country list of axiophytes (administered by EcoRecord) by four locally defined habitat types.

Ecological Sub-area Statement of Biodiversity Priorities – Technical Appendix

Sub-area name	Brownhills Common & Pelsall	Sub-area ref.	CL04
Natural Character Area	Cannock Chase and Cank Wood	NCA ref.	67
Local Authority Area	Walsall	Area km²	12.43

Ecological Sub-area Description

Overview

Brownhills Common & Pelsall comprises the northern Walsall green belt around the settlements of Brownhills, Pelsall and Aldridge, along with the undeveloped valleys of the Ford Brook and its tributaries which flow southwards towards Walsall town centre. To the north lies the open countryside of South Staffordshire, whilst to the south is Core Landscape CL06 Park Lime Pits, Cuckoo's Dingle & Great Barr Hall.

Historically part of Cannock Forest and later the parishes and townships of Norton Canes, Walsall Foreign, Pelsall and Bloxwich, the area contains a number of commons that were formally surrounded by open fields. Today the landscape is dominated by mostly rectilinear fields that were enclosed during the late medieval and post medieval periods.

Brownhills Common & Pelsall is the only area in the Black Country with surface peat which is present along the eastern boundary and to the west of Pelsall.

Land Use

The land use in the northern part of Brownhills Common & Pelsall is dominated by agriculture (permeant grassland and arable) with substantial areas of semi-natural habitat including woodland, heathland, grassland and wetland, much of which is public open space or de facto accessible green space, and primarily post-industrial. Bloxwich Golf Club is situated in the north-west of the ecological sub-area. In the south-east there are a number of active quarries from which clay is extracted for brick manufacture. The land use in the south-eastern section is more diverse and modified through proximity to the urban environment, but retains a significant area of agricultural permanent grassland comprised of small fields, often with defunct or removed hedgerows. Other land use includes allotments, playing fields, Ryecroft Cemetery, a sewage treatment works and semi-natural green space including Mill Lane nature reserve and Goscote Wedge.

Topography

The highest points in the ecological sub-area at an elevation of 150 metres are in the north-west and at Brownhills Common in the north. From here the levels gradually fall away to the bottom of watercourse valleys of the Rough Brook, Ford Brook and Anchor Brook along which ecological sub-area is focused. These lie at an elevation of 140 to 120 metres.

Geology

The bedrock in of the north-western part of the ecological sub-area is sedimentary mudstone, siltstone and sandstone of Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation formed between 318 and 309.5 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. The central and southern area is mudstone, siltstone and sandstone of the Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation and Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation formed between 319 and 309.5 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. The eastern section is Alveley Member sandstone formed between 309.5 and 308 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. In the north-east there is a small area of Chester Formation sandstone and conglomerate, interbedded, formed between 250 and 247.1 million years ago during the Triassic period.

Most of the ecological sub-area is overlain with superficial deposits of Devensian diamicton till, with some areas of glaciofluvial sand and gravel in the central and north-eastern sections, formed between 116 and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period.

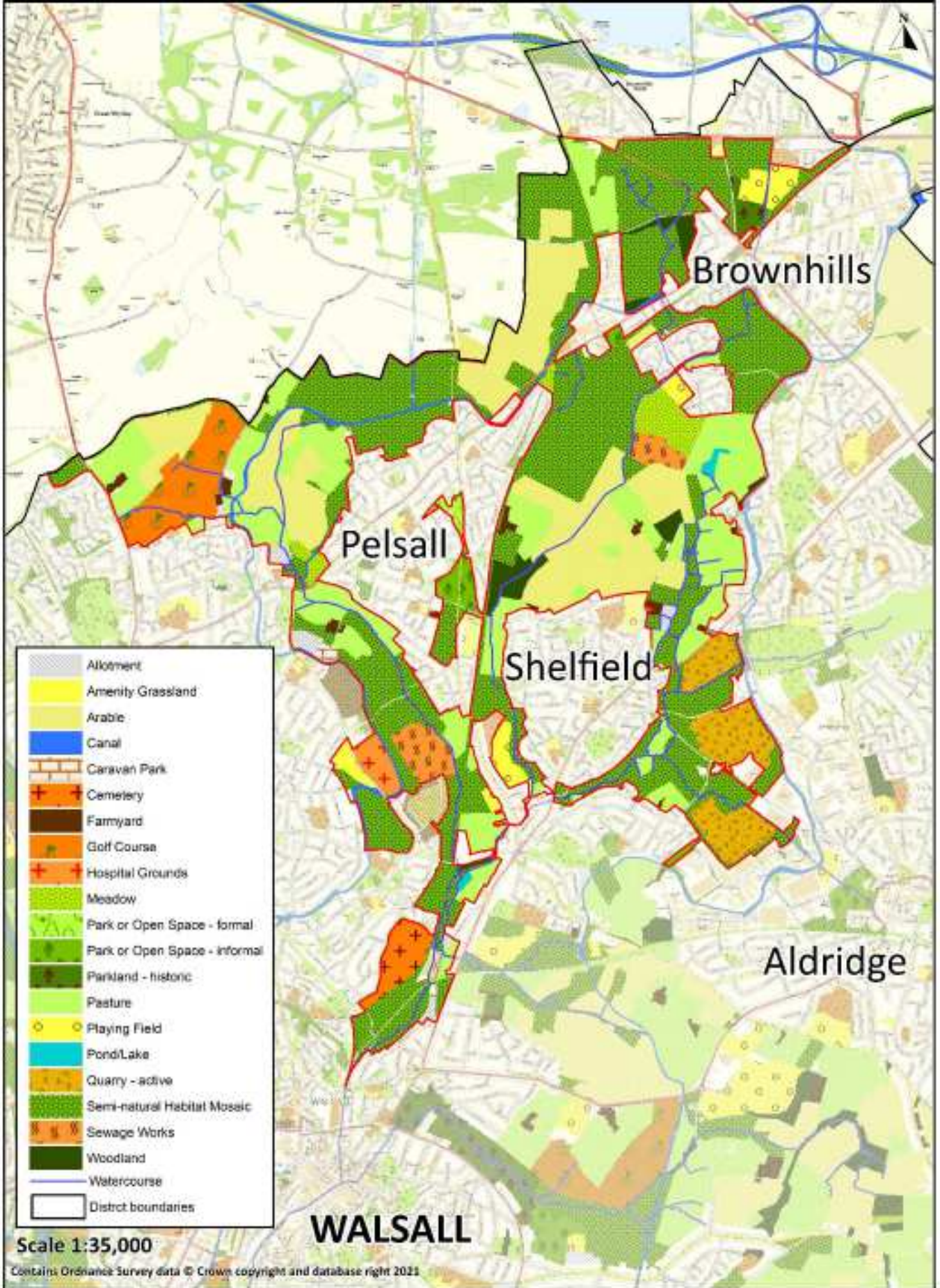
Geopark Sites

n/a

Soils

The soils in the western section of the ecological sub-area are predominantly slowly permeable, seasonally wet and slightly acid, but base-rich loamy and clayey, with moderate fertility and impeded drainage. The eastern section is dominated by naturally wet loamy and sandy soils with naturally high groundwater and a peaty surface, with low to high fertility. There are areas throughout the ecological sub-area where, as a legacy of industrial activity including coal mining, the soils are restored, mostly from quarry and opencast spoil, loamy, and with low to moderate fertility and variable drainage.

CL04 Brownhills Common and Pelsall – Land Use



Historic Landscape Character Areas			
Reference	WL13	Name	Pelsall
<p>Most of the ecological sub area lies within HLCA WL13 Pelsall. This Character Area is situated in the north of the Walsall borough, on the eastern edge of the South Staffordshire coalfield. The modern character of the area is defined by field systems, open land, and dispersed settlements. The largest settlement, Pelsall, occupies the centre of the Character Area and has a large central common. Pelsall is first mentioned in a charter of AD 994, when it was granted to the church at Wolverhampton. The early settlement is likely to have been situated around Pelsall Hall. Medieval Pelsall was likely to have been surrounded by open fields that were enclosed during the late medieval and post medieval periods. Several parts of the area have been used for 19th and 20th century coal extraction although most of the collieries in the area were closed by 1900. The Character Area is crossed by several railways, all of which have fallen out of use.</p>			
Reference	WL04	Name	Brownhills & Walsall Wood
<p>The eastern part of the ecological sub-area includes a small part of WL04 Brownhills & Walsall Wood comprising a school playing field and SINC WA017 Walsall to Lichfield Railway Line.</p>			

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]			
Reference	APA 4	Name	Watling Street
<p>The APA contains the remains of the Roman road, Watling Street, the Wroxeter to Wall (<i>Letocetum</i>) section. The road runs in a westerly direction from Wall to Brownhills Common, marked by the present-day road, which is raised in places (Margary 1967). The modern road was extensively widened during the 1970s, revealing archaeological evidence of the Roman road suggesting that the road had developed from an earlier prehistoric route way. The road continued in use from the Roman period and in the 17th century was the alternative road between London and Chester.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 8	Name	Brownhills Common
<p>The AHHLV is located on Brownhills Common, a tract of ancient waste land. The common was subject to intensive industrial activity during the post-medieval period and contains a concentration of industrial remains associated with Coppice and Watling Street Collieries. A brick works is shown immediately to the north of Coppice Colliery on the 1883 Ordnance Survey (OS) map. The remains of an area of open cast mining (up to 15 pits), including bell pits representing an older phase of mining activity, are present in this area. The earlier workings were largely replaced by deeper pits when the Wyrley & Essington Canal was built in 1794 and the earlier bell pits could no longer meet the demand for coal. The remains of railway lines and tramways associated with the industrial usage of the site are also present and the AHHLV contains the site of the Brownhills Midland Railway Station, which opened in 1882.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 2	Name	Birch Grove Coppice
<p>The AHHLV is semi-natural ancient woodland. Accordingly, it has the potential to contain well-preserved prehistoric archaeological remains (although none are currently known) and may contain features associated with medieval and post-medieval woodland management.</p>			
Reference	APA 17	Name	Slough Colliery Lime Kilns
<p>The APA contains the site of the Slough Colliery Lime Kilns. The kilns are marked on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map as old kilns, and buildings are shown at this location on the 1816 Ordnance Surveyors drawings. The area is now overgrown but it may contain upstanding remains associated with the lime kilns. The Slough Colliery was served by three canal wharves (no longer present). The APA may contain archaeological remains associated with the canal. The site is shown as flooded on the 1827 Parish Map.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 1	Name	Pelsall Works
<p>The AHHLV is situated upon the coal measures, and contains areas of ridge and furrow which may date back to the medieval period and could provide archaeological evidence for medieval and early post-medieval land use. The area also contains the remains of the Pelsall Iron Works.</p> <p>The AHHLV contains several extant remains associated with the industrial use of the area, including the listed Wyrley and Essington Canal foot bridge at Pelsall Junction, the Pelsall Works Bridge and the locally listed buildings of Friar Bridge, Pelsall Common Bridge and the stables adjacent to the Cannock Extension Canal. The last are a nationally rare example of stables originally used to house canal tow horses. In addition, the area contains non-designated archaeological remains associated with the Pelsall Iron Works and colliery and parts of the Cannock Extension Canal (1821-1880) and Wyrley and Essington Canal (1791-1800).</p>			

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]

The Pelsall Iron Works was opened in 1832 by Mr Richard Fryer, and after his death (1846) it was sold to Davis and Bloomer. It is listed in William White's 1851 History, Gazetteer and Directory of Staffordshire as producing the highest quality bar and sheet iron. The Pelsall Iron Works grew into an extensive facility with two blast furnaces, forty puddling furnaces, seven mills and forges, a gashouse and gasometer, and a large tramway with locomotive and wagon sheds. While none of these buildings are visible within the AHHLV, the area has the potential to contain previously unidentified structures and below ground archaeological remains associated with the ironworks (History Website 2018).

Reference	AHHLV 18	Name	Fishley Farm
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The AHHLV contains evidence of past mineral extraction and also contains a possible medieval moated site, which could provide evidence about the pre-industrial land usage in the area. The moat appears to have been infilled but could still contain waterlogged remains, which could reveal further information about the medieval landscape. A locally listed late 18th century barn also survives within the moated site.

A number of industrial buildings associated with Fishery Colliery and Shaft are also present within the AHHLV providing evidence of former coal extraction. A watermill is also recorded within the AHHLV. Some of the structures associated with the Colliery appear to survive, including a mid-19th century former engine and boiler house (now locally listed). The Wyrley and Essington Canal Extension passes through the eastern part of the AHHLV.

Reference	AHHLV 43	Name	Pelsall Common
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The AHHLV contains Pelsall Common. Pelsall was first mentioned in a charter of 994 AD amongst various lands granted to the monastery at Wolverhampton. The land was still part of the monastery lands at the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, which describes the area as wasteland (probably an area of lowland heath similar to that found at Brownhills Common or Cannock Chase). The common is shown as unenclosed on Yates' 1798 map of Staffordshire and continues to be so marked until the 1920-24 Ordnance Survey map, when it appears to have been utilised as parkland, although it is still referred to as Pelsall Common. The tree lined avenues were present by the 1902-1904 Ordnance Survey map while the routes that they line are present on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887-89.

The first known settlement in the area is recorded in the 14th century and was focused in the area now known as Old Town outside the AHHLV. Common edge settlement appeared on the edges of the common during the 19th century as a result of the industrialisation of the area. The northern part of the common was used as an iron works during the 19th century, and a gravel pit is shown within the common from the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map, highlighting the early industrial exploitation of it.

The AHHLV draws archaeological interest from the industrial features within it. It also represents a surviving expanse of common land that does not appear to have been developed or farmed. Away from the disturbance caused by mineral activities within the common there is the potential for well-preserved archaeological remains to survive.

Reference	AHHLV 12	Name	Rails Wood
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Rails Wood is an area of semi-natural ancient woodland. It has the potential to contain well preserved prehistoric and Roman archaeological remains (although none are currently known), and may contain features associated with medieval and post-medieval woodland management. Ancient woodlands represent surviving patches of the historic landscape that date back to the early post-medieval period.

Reference	APA 1	Name	Pelsall Burnt Mound
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The APA contains black earth and burnt stones, which have been recorded in the area since the early 20th century. These remains are thought to be the surviving elements of a prehistoric burnt mound. A mound was recorded at this location but this has since been eroded by the stream. The APA has the potential to contain below-ground archaeological remains associated with the burnt mound. These remains are rare as there is very little surviving prehistoric archaeology in Walsall.

Reference	AHHTV 3	Name	Wyrley and Essington Canal extension through Bloxwich, Pelsall and Brownhills
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The AHHTV contains the Wyrley and Essington Canal Extension. The canal extension was opened in 1794 as an extension to link the original Wyrley and Essington Canal (opened in 1794) to the Birmingham and Fazeley canal. This extension linked the Bloxwich, Pelsall and Brownhills areas with the rest of Staffordshire. The canal was used to export coal from the Wolverhampton area. The presence of this new transport link led to the development and industrialisation of this part of Walsall.

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]

The AHHTV contains Four Grade II listed buildings (the Wyrley and Essington Canal Foot Bridge at Pelsall Junction, the Pelsall Works Bridge, the aqueduct over the railway line to the north of Number 50 Raymond Close, and the Railway bridge, approximately 100m south east of Backs Bridge, Pelsall Road) and two locally listed buildings (Yorks Bridge and Coopers Bridge). These nationally and locally important buildings are directly associated with the creation and development of the canal and make a positive contribution to the quality of the historic environment.

The AHHTV interacts with the industrial landscapes at Brownhills Common, Pelsall Works and Fishley Farm showcasing the connection between the canal and the industrial development of the area. The listed buildings within the AHHTV are all directly associated with the canal which makes a significant contribution to the setting of these buildings.

Reference	APA 23	Name	Coal Pool Mill
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The APA contains an old mill pool (now dried up) and the earthwork remains of a dam. The dam stretches across the valley floor and there is a general scatter of forge cinder surrounding it. Yates' 1778 map shows a pond at this location. It is thought to be the site of a possible medieval bloomery and later post-medieval mill. The area has the potential to contain evidence of medieval iron working. Bloomery sites were widely spread across the country but physical remains are rare and often represented by concentrations of ironworking debris.

Reference	APA 20	Name	Goscote Bloomery
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The APA contains a mound of ash cinder and early bloomery slag of suggested medieval date and has been interpreted as the remains of a medieval bloomery. Bloomery sites were widely spread across the country but physical remains are rare and often represented by concentrations of ironworking debris.

Waterbody Catchments

River Basin District	Management Catchment	Tame, Anker and Mease	
Waterbody Catchment	Overall Classification	Ecological	Chemical
Ford Brook from Source to River Tame	Moderate (2019)	Moderate (2019)	Fail (2019)

Key Habitats [2]			
Broad Habitat Type	Arable & Horticultural	Priority Habitat	
<p>There is a concentration of arable fields in the north of the ecological sub-area which are mostly rectilinear and therefore of later enclosure origin, however, in the north-east there is an area of irregular fields which may be earlier. Many of the arable fields have been created through the amalgamation of a number of smaller fields, and in some cases the former hedgerows are represented by field trees.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Boundary & Linear Features	Priority Habitat	Hedgerows
<p>Numerous field boundary hedgerows throughout the sub-area associated with rectilinear fields created through Parliamentary enclosure, and in the north-west some which may be from earlier piecemeal enclosure in the late medieval/ early post-medieval periods. Hedgerow trees are scarce in the former but frequent in the latter. Only a small proportion of the hedgerows have been assessed against the Local Wildlife Sites selection criteria and of these a number in the northern (e.g. Farmland at Yorks Bridge) and central parts (High Heath Common Farmland) of the ecological sub-area have been selected as SLINCs. Assessment of aerial photography suggests many of the hedgerows are defunct and there is significant variation in hedgerow size (i.e. management practice).</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Standing Open Water	Priority Habitat	Ponds
<p>There is a relatively high number of ponds within the ecological sub-area, many of which are within sites designated for their ecological value (SSSI, LNR, SINC and SLINC). Some of the ponds are likely to be field ponds of pre-industrial origin and are depicted on historic mapping (19th century OS) in areas unaffected by 19th and 20th century industry. Many are, however, associated with former industrial land use including mine subsidence and other extraction industries. Due to both the underlying geology/soil conditions and the legacy of industrial activity, the vegetation communities of many of the ponds are likely to be influenced by acidic conditions.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Standing Open Water	Priority Habitat	Eutrophic Standing Waters
<p>There are two waterbodies in Brownhills Common & Pelsall which are over 2 hectares in extent and which, although the trophic status of these isn't confirmed, are likely to meet the definition of Eutrophic Standing Waters. These are Ryders Hayes Mere in the north of the ecological sub-area which was created in the 1990s on the site of an opencast coal mine, and The Swag in south-east, part of which is designated as a SSSI for its value to roosting hirundines.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Standing Open Water	Priority Habitat	
<p>The Wyrley & Essington Canal is a significant feature in Brownhills Common & Pelsall, with a substantial section of this meandering through the northern and western parts of the ecological sub-area. The canal is fed by Chasewater reservoir and is of low chemical and nutrient status, consequently being of high ecological value in the context of the Black Country canal network. The canal supports a diverse assemblage of aquatic vegetation, as well as populations of coarse fish, freshwater invertebrates and wetland birds.</p> <p>A short stretch of the Cannock Extension Canal is situated within Pelsall North Common in the north of the ecological sub-area from its junction with the Wyrley & Essington. The canal is designated as both a SSSI and SAC for its rich aquatic flora.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Rivers and Streams	Priority Habitat	Rivers
<p>There are three watercourses (the Grange Brook and Ford Brook which rise in the north, and the Anchor Brook that rises in the east) along with numerous minor tributaries and drains within Brownhills Common & Pelsall. The confluences of the three watercourses are in the south of the ecological sub-area, eventually becoming the Ford Brook which flows southwards towards Walsall town centre. The channels of the watercourses are frequently modified and support few natural features associated with sediment erosion and deposition, however, some stretches within parts of the agricultural landscape are less modified and support more diverse natural features. There is a known barrier to fish movement at the confluence of the Ford Brook and Rough Brook in the south of the ecological sub-area.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Acid Grassland	Priority Habitat	Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
<p>Lowland dry acid grassland is present within Brownhills Common & Pelsall on both undisturbed and post-industrial substrates, more frequently on the latter at sites including Pelsall North Common and Brownhills Common.</p>			

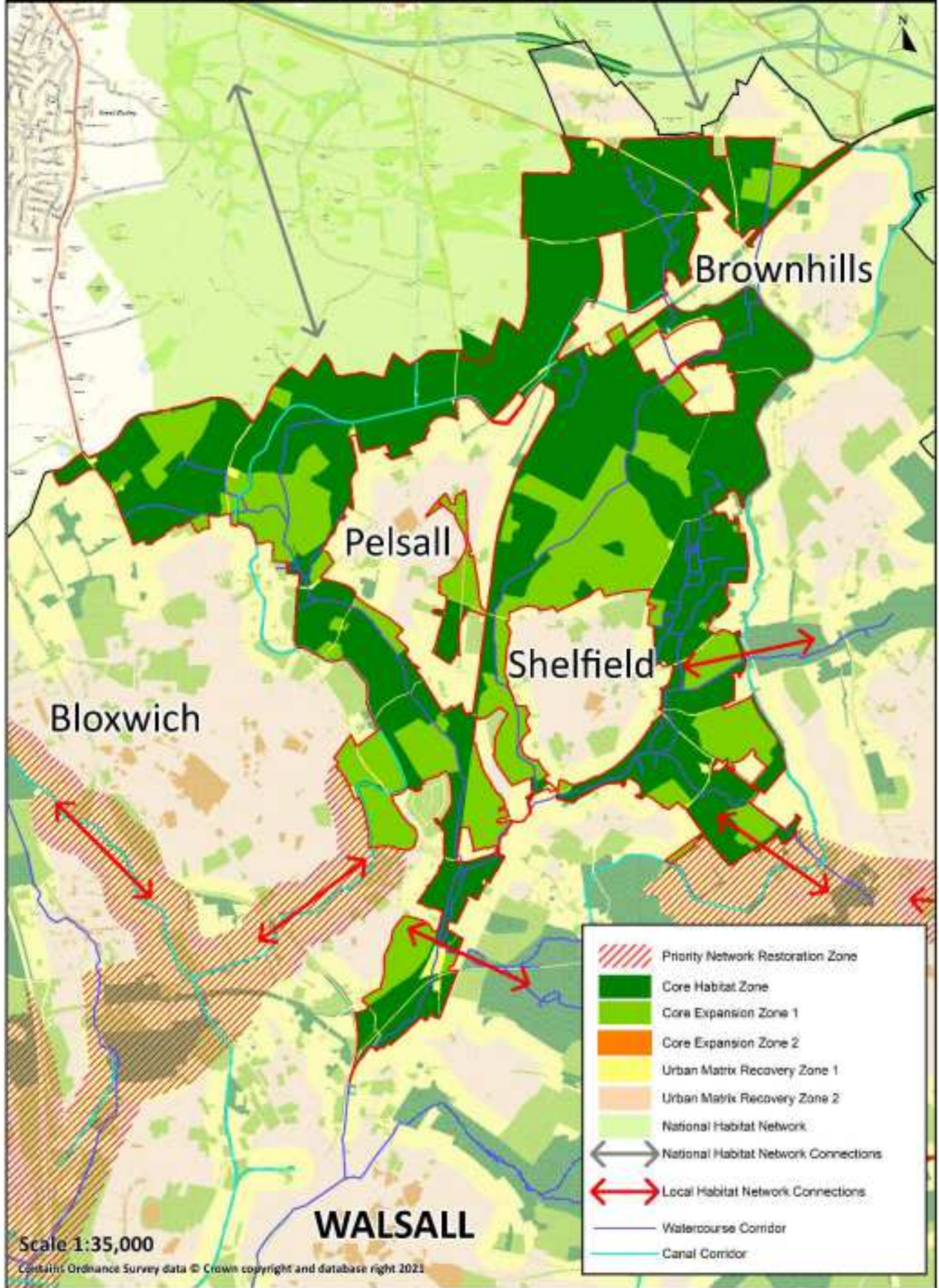
Key Habitats [2]			
Pastures are frequent throughout the sub-area and further areas of acidic grassland may be present. Some roadside grasslands may also support the Priority Habitat.			
Broad Habitat Type	Dwarf Shrub Heath	Priority Habitat	Lowland Heathland
There are areas of remnant lowland heathland dominated by Common Heather at Pelsall North Common, Brownhills Common and Pelsall Common. Heather and other associated heathland species have also become established on post-industrial substrates at Pelsall North Common and Brownhills Common.			
Broad Habitat Type	Bog	Priority Habitat	Lowland raised bog
Stubber's Green Bog SSSI in the south-east of the ecological sub-area is a heavily degraded area of peat bog which has been partially drained and is heavily scrubbed over.			
Broad Habitat Type	Fen, Marsh and Swamp	Priority Habitat	Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture
Areas of floristically diverse damp and marshy grassland, some of which meets the description of Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture, are present on poorly drained acidic soils on both undisturbed and post-industrial substrates at sites including Jockey Fields, Brownhills Common, Pelsall North Common and Clayhanger.			
Broad Habitat Type	Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Priority Habitat	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
There are two areas of woodland within Brownhills Common & Pelsall that are designated as Ancient Semi-natural Woodland by Natural England, both of which are remnants of larger sites as depicted on 19 th century OS mapping. Birch Coppice in the north of the ecological sub-area is Oak and Birch-dominated, has been heavily disturbed by historic industrial activity including tipping of colliery waste, and supports a typical acidic woodland flora. Rails Wood in the south is Birch-dominated, supports a similar flora and may have been clear-felled in the early 20 th century.			
Broad Habitat Type	Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Priority Habitat	
There are several small mature Oak-dominated woodlands in the ecological sub-area which are considered to be old plantations and not ancient. These include Grange Farm Wood and Turner's Wood off Pelsall Common. There are substantial areas of secondary woodland in the north of the ecological sub-area, with a concentration at Brownhills Common that has colonised large areas of colliery workings and spoil. This is predominantly Birch-dominated and supports a species-poor field-layer. Young Birch woodland has also colonised parts of Pelsall North Common and Mill Lane nature reserve in the south of the ecological sub-area. There are a number of areas of young planted woodland throughout Brownhills Common & Pelsall, predominantly of native broad-leaved species, at sites including Ryder's Hayes Mere, Goscote Wedge, Clayhanger Common and to the south of Rails Wood, as well as between the fairways of Bloxwich Golf Club.			

Key Species [3]	
Bird indicators	
Farmland	Common Reed Bunting, Eurasian Skylark, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Grey Partridge, Jackdaw, Kestrel, Lapwing, Linnet, Rook, Starling, Stock Dove, Tree Sparrow, Whitethroat, Woodpigeon, Yellowhammer.
Woodland	Blackbird, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Common Chaffinch, Dunnock, Eurasian Blackcap, Eurasian Blue Tit, Eurasian Bullfinch, Eurasian Nuthatch, Eurasian Wren, European Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Jay, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Lesser Whitethroat, Long-tailed Tit, Robin, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Tawny Owl, Tree Pipit, Treecreeper, Willow Tit, Willow Warbler, Wood Warbler.
Water & Wetland	Common Merganser, Common Reed Bunting, Common Sandpiper, Eurasian Coot, Great Crested Grebe, Grey Heron, Grey Wagtail, Kingfisher, Lapwing, Little Grebe, Mallard, Moorhen, Mute Swan, Oystercatcher, Reed Warbler, Sand Martin, Snipe, Teal, Tufted Duck
Other	Black-headed Gull, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Collared Dove, Common Firecrest, Common House Martin, Cuckoo, Eurasian Magpie, Gadwall, Hobby, House Sparrow, Meadow Pipit, Mistle Thrush, Northern Raven, Pied Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Pochard, Shoveler, Stonechat, Swallow, Swift, Whinchat.
Amphibians & Reptiles	
Amphibians	Common Frog, Common Toad, Great Crested Newt, Smooth Newt.
Reptiles	Common Lizard
Mammals	
Bats	Brown Long-eared Bat, Common Pipistrelle, Daubenton's Bat, Noctule Bat, Soprano Pipistrelle.
Other	Brown Hare, Eurasian Badger, European Otter, European Water Vole, Polecat, West European Hedgehog.
Fish	
Bony Fish	Barbel
Jawless Fish	none
Invertebrates	
Assemblage type	
Flora (axiophytes)	
Woodland	<i>Ajuga reptans, Angelica sylvestris, Athyrium filix-femina, Blechnum spicant, Brachypodium sylvaticum, Bromopsis ramosa, Caltha palustris, Cardamine amara, Carex remota, Deschampsia flexuosa, Dryopteris affinis, Festuca gigantea, Filipendula ulmaria, Fragaria vesca, Frangula alnus, Lysimachia vulgaris, Malus sylvestris, Mercurialis perennis, Milium effusum, Molinia caerulea, Persicaria hydropiper, Poa nemoralis, Polystichum setiferum, Quercus petraea, Scirpus sylvaticus, Stellaria holostea, Teucrium scorodonia, Tilia cordata, Torilis japonica, Veronica montana</i>
Grassland	<i>Achillea ptarmica, Agrimonia eupatoria, Agrostis canina, Aira caryophyllea, Ajuga reptans, Blechnum spicant, Brachypodium sylvaticum, Briza media, Caltha palustris, Campanula rotundifolia, Carex caryophyllea, Centaurium erythraea, Cerastium semidecandrum, Cirsium dissectum, Cirsium palustre, Dactylorhiza fuchsii, Dactylorhiza fuchsii x praetermissa = D. x grandis, Dactylorhiza praetermissa, Dactylorhiza praetermissa x purpurella = D. x insignis, Danthonia decumbens, Daucus carota subsp. carota, Deschampsia flexuosa, Euphrasia, Euphrasia nemorosa, Euphrasia officinalis agg., Festuca filiformis, Filipendula ulmaria, Fragaria vesca, Galium saxatile, Isolepis setacea, Lathyrus nissolia, Leontodon hispidus, Linum catharticum, Lotus pedunculatus, Nardus stricta, Odontites vernus, Ononis repens, Persicaria bistorta, Plantago media, Potentilla erecta, Poterium sanguisorba subsp. sanguisorba, Rhinanthus minor, Sanguisorba officinalis, Sherardia arvensis, Silene flos-cuculi, Stachys officinalis, Stellaria holostea, Succisa pratensis, Taraxacum sect. Erythrosperma, Trifolium medium.</i>
Heathland	<i>Agrostis canina, Agrostis vinealis, Aira praecox, Blechnum spicant, Calluna vulgaris, Campanula rotundifolia, Carex nigra, Carex pilulifera, Dactylorhiza maculata, Danthonia decumbens, Deschampsia flexuosa, Erica cinerea, Erica tetralix, Festuca filiformis, Galium saxatile, Juncus squarrosus, Luzula multiflora, Luzula multiflora subsp. congesta, Molinia caerulea, Nardus stricta, Oreopteris limbosperma, Pedicularis sylvatica, Polygala serpyllifolia, Potentilla erecta, Salix aurita, Senecio sylvaticus, Teucrium scorodonia, Ulex gallii, Vaccinium myrtillus, Vaccinium vitis-idaea.</i>

Mires	<i>Achillea ptarmica, Agrostis canina, Agrostis vinealis, Anagallis tenella, Angelica sylvestris, Apium inundatum, Athyrium filix-femina, Briza media, Calamagrostis epigejos, Caltha palustris, Cardamine amara, Carex acuta, Carex acutiformis, Carex nigra, Carex panicea, Carex pseudocyperus, Carex riparia, Carex rostrata, Carex viridula subsp. oedocarpa, Cirsium dissectum, Cirsium palustre, Dactylorhiza fuchsii, Dactylorhiza fuchsii x praetermissa = D. x grandis, Dactylorhiza maculata, Dactylorhiza praetermissa, Dactylorhiza praetermissa x purpurella = D. x insignis, Dryopteris carthusiana, Eleocharis palustris, Eleogiton fluitans, Epilobium palustre, Equisetum fluviatile, Equisetum palustre, Erica tetralix, Eriophorum angustifolium, Eriophorum vaginatum, Filipendula ulmaria, Galium palustre, Galium palustre subsp. palustre, Glyceria declinata, Glyceria notata, Hydrocotyle vulgaris, Hypericum tetrapterum, Isolepis setacea, Jacobaea aquatica, Juncus acutiflorus, Juncus bulbosus, Juncus squarrosus, Lotus pedunculatus, Luzula multiflora, Luzula multiflora subsp. congesta, Lysimachia vulgaris, Lythrum portula, Molinia caerulea, Pedicularis sylvatica, Persicaria hydropiper, Potamogeton polygonifolius, Potentilla palustris, Pulicaria dysenterica, Ranunculus aquatilis, Ranunculus aquatilis, Ranunculus circinatus, Ranunculus flammula, Ranunculus hederaceus, Scirpus sylvaticus, Silene flos-cuculi, Sparganium emersum, Stachys palustris, Stellaria alsine, Succisa pratensis, Triglochin palustre, Veronica beccabunga, Veronica scutellata.</i>
Open Water	<i>Apium inundatum, Bidens cernua, Bidens tripartita, Butomus umbellatus, Carex acuta, Carex acutiformis, Carex pseudocyperus, Carex riparia, Eleocharis palustris, Equisetum fluviatile, Galium palustre, Galium palustre subsp. palustre, Glyceria notata, Luronium natans, Lythrum portula, Potamogeton friesii, Potamogeton lucens, Potamogeton perfoliatus, Potamogeton polygonifolius, Ranunculus aquatilis, Ranunculus aquatilis, Ranunculus circinatus, Sagittaria sagittifolia, Schoenoplectus lacustris, Veronica catenata, Veronica scutellata.</i>
Post-industrial (water-stressed)	<i>Agrimonia eupatoria, Aira caryophylla, Aira praecox, Anthyllis vulneraria, Arenaria serpyllifolia, Arenaria serpyllifolia, Arenaria serpyllifolia subsp. serpyllifolia, Asplenium adiantum-nigrum, Blechnum spicant, Centaurea scabiosa, Centaurium erythraea, Cerastium semidecandrum, Chaenorhinum minus, Daucus carota subsp. carota, Deschampsia flexuosa, Erigeron acris, Erophila verna, Erophila verna, Filago vulgaris, Fragaria vesca, Jacobaea erucifolia, Linum catharticum, Ophrys apifera, Polygala serpyllifolia, Poterium sanguisorba subsp. sanguisorba, Reseda lutea, Senecio viscosus, Sherardia arvensis, Silene vulgaris, Silene vulgaris subsp. vulgaris, Taraxacum sect. Erythrosperma, Trifolium arvense, Trifolium medium, Vicia tetrasperma.</i>
Cultivation	<i>Chenopodium polyspermum, Vicia tetrasperma.</i>

Ecological Connectivity
Local Habitat Network
<p>Direct ecological connection to the local habitat network in Core Landscape 05 (Barr Beacon, Druid's Heath & Shire Oak) and Core Landscape 06 (Park Lime Pits, Cuckoo's Nook and Great Barr Hall).</p> <p>Midlands Heathland Heartland Lowland Heathland Nature Recovery Opportunity Mapping (EcoRecord and Staffordshire Ecological Record, 2021) identifies a heathland connectivity bottleneck within the ecological sub-area and this and between Core Landscape 05.</p> <p>Link via Priority Network Restoration Zone Daw End Branch Canal & Aldridge Town linking CL04 to CL05 and CL06.</p>
National Habitat Network
<p>There is a direct ecological connection along almost the entire northern boundary to the National Habitat Network in rural South Staffordshire.</p> <p>Indirect connection to Cannock Chase SAC (Staffordshire) via rural heathland sites in Walsall and Staffordshire (inc. Chasewater and The Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI) identified in Midlands Heathland Heartland Lowland Heathland Nature Recovery Opportunity Mapping.</p>

CL04 - Brownhills Common and Pelsall - Components & Connectivity



Ecological Sub-area Opportunities

Focus Habitats		
Habitat	Action	Measure
Arable Field Margins	Create new	New habitat
Hedgerows	Improve management of existing	Habitat in good condition
	Restore through gapping up	Habitat in good condition
	Reinstate lost field-boundary hedgerows	New habitat
	Establish hedgerow trees	Habitat structure improved
Lowland Heathland	Improve habitat at existing sites	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Lowland dry acid grassland	Improve habitat at existing sites	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Coppice	Habitat structure improved
	Create woodland edge	Habitat structure improved
	Diversify woody component	Habitat structure improved
Ponds	Restore existing	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture	Improve habitat at existing sites	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Rivers	Improve soil management	Reduced silt inputs to watercourses
	Reduce artificial inputs	Improved chemical status
	Restore hydromorphology (naturalise modified channels and mitigate barriers)	Improved ecological status

Target Species	
Species/Species Group	Measure
Adder	Confirmed recent records
Breeding farmland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Breeding woodland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Brown Long-eared Bat	Confirmed recent records
Common Lizard	Confirmed recent records
Cuckoo	Confirmed recent records
Great Crested Newt	Increased abundance and number of sites
Heather	Increased abundance and number of sites
Hedgehog	Confirmed recent records
Woodland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Grassland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Mires axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Open Water axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Post-industrial axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance

Geodiversity		
Site	Action	Measure
None	n/a	

Connectivity Opportunities	
Local Habitat Network	
Connection	Action
Within Core Landscape CL04	Heathland associated habitat enhancement and creation at arable and other undeveloped land including golf courses, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Woodland enhancement and planting on non-grassland or heathland sites.
	Field boundary hedgerow restoration and creation.
	Restoration and creation of peat-forming habitats.
Priority Network Restoration Zone Wyrley & Essington Canal linking CL04 to CL03 and wider ecological network.	Reduction of artificial inputs to canal waterbody.
	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation on undeveloped land including parks, green spaces, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Woodland enhancement and small-scale planting.
Priority Network Restoration Zone Daw End Branch Canal & Aldridge Town linking CL04 to CL05 and CL06.	Planting of standard trees (including fruit trees) along canal corridor.
	Reduction of artificial inputs to canal waterbody.
	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation on undeveloped land including parks, green spaces, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Woodland enhancement and small-scale planting.
Staffordshire Heathlands inc. Chasewater and The Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI	Planting of standard trees (including fruit trees) along canal corridor.
	Reduction of artificial inputs to canal waterbody.
	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation on undeveloped land including parks, green spaces, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Woodland enhancement and small-scale planting.
National Habitat Network	
Staffordshire Heathlands inc. Chasewater and The Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI	Heathland associated habitat enhancement and creation at arable and other undeveloped land including golf courses, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Field boundary hedgerow restoration and creation.
	Planting of street trees along urban roads.
	Creation of new ponds and wetlands.

Information and Data Sources		
	Source	Date
Landuse	Ecological Evaluation of Birmingham and Black Country GIS data set, EcoRecord.	2021
Topography	OS Terrain 50 GIS data set, Ordnance Survey.	2017
Geology	British Geological Society 1:625,000 bedrock & superficial GIS web map services from BGS website: http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html	2021
	Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark sites names and location information https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/bcg/	2021
Soils	Soilscapes, Cranfield Soil & Agricultural Institute website: http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/	2021
Species and Habitats	EcoRecord species and habitat databases.	2021
Ecological Connectivity	EcoRecord, The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country (2021) <i>Draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map</i>	2021
	EcoRecord et al. (2021) <i>Midlands Heathland Heartland Lowland Heathland Nature Recovery Opportunity Mapping</i> .	2021
Historic Landscape Character Areas	Wolverhampton City Council (2010) <i>Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation</i> [data-set]. York: Archaeology Data Service [distributor] https://doi.org/10.5284/1000030	2010
Historic Environment Area Designations	Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study, Oxford Archaeology.	2019

[1] HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AREA DESIGNATIONS

The Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study has divided the Historic Environment Area Designations into four categories:

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Designed Landscapes of High Historic Value (DLHHV): landscape areas that make an important contribution to local historic character but do not meet the criteria for inclusion on the national Register for Parks and Gardens. The significance of these areas is likely to arise from their historic, artistic and architectural interests, although such areas may also contain remains of archaeological interest.

Areas of High Historic Landscape Value (AHHLV): these recognise the quality of the wider landscape and their relative values. The significance of these areas arises from the natural and historic features contained within them (e.g. woodland, watercourses, hedgerows, and archaeological features). The significance of these areas is likely to be derived from their archaeological and historic interests.

[2] KEY HABITATS follows the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Broad & Priority Habitat definitions

This is a UK-habitat classification prepared by the UK Biodiversity Group that classifies all terrestrial and freshwater habitats in the UK into 37 broad habitat types. UK BAP Priority Habitats are a range of semi-natural habitat types that were identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action. The original Priority Habitat list was created between 1995 and 1999 and revised in 2007. The list of Priority Habitats has been used to help draw up statutory lists of habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The suite of habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity (formerly Priority Habitats) nest into the defined Broad Habitat Types.

[3] KEY SPECIES

Bird Indicators: Species listed under UK Biodiversity Indicator C5, Birds of the wider countryside and at sea (JNCC). The indicator shows changes in the breeding population sizes of common native birds of farmland and woodland and of freshwater and marine habitats in the UK.

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Invertebrates: Pantheon Assemblage Types Analysis.

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Ecological Sub-area Statement of Biodiversity Priorities – Technical Appendix

Sub-area ref.	CL05	Sub-area name	Barr Beacon, Druid's Heath and Shire Oak
NCA ref.	67	Natural Character Area	Cannock Chase & Cank Wood
Area km²	10.79	Local Authority Area	Walsall

Ecological Sub-area Description

Overview

Barr Beacon, Druid's Heath and Shire Oak comprises the rural eastern part of both the borough of Walsall and of the Black Country, with Staffordshire to the north and east, the Black Country Settlements of Brownhills, Walsall Wood and Aldridge to the north-west, rural parts of Great Barr to the south-west and the modern settlements of Pheasey and Streetly to the south and south-east. Sutton Park (Birmingham) lies approximately 1 km to the south-east beyond Streetly.

Historically parts of the parishes of Shenstone and Aldridge (including the township of Great Barr), the landscape is dominated by rectilinear fields and some plantation woodlands that were enclosed from commons and open fields through Parliamentary Acts in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Close to historic settlements there are earlier piecemeal and irregular enclosed fields.

Land Use

Predominantly arable agricultural with areas of pasture and dispersed farms. There are smaller areas of woodland and semi-natural mosaic habitat. There are a number of disused sand quarries including those at what are now Shire Oak Park Local Nature Reserve and Pinfold Lane Quarry Local Nature Reserve. Barr Beacon Local Nature Reserve is in the south of the sub-area comprising acid grassland, scrub, plantation woodland and recently created dry heathland. Druid's Heath Golf Course and Streetly Crematorium are also within the sub-area.

Topography

In the south of the sub-area Barr Beacon is the highest point in Walsall at 236 metres. From here the land falls away and levels out to the north and east to 130 metres, before rising again to 180 m at Shire Oak Park.

Geology

Dominated by Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) Sandstone and Conglomerate, Interbedded sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 200 to 251 million years ago in the Triassic Period. In the north-west of the sub-area are Warwickshire Group Siltstone and Sandstone with Subordinate Mudstone. These sedimentary bedrocks formed approximately 271 to 312 million years ago in the Permian and Carboniferous Periods.

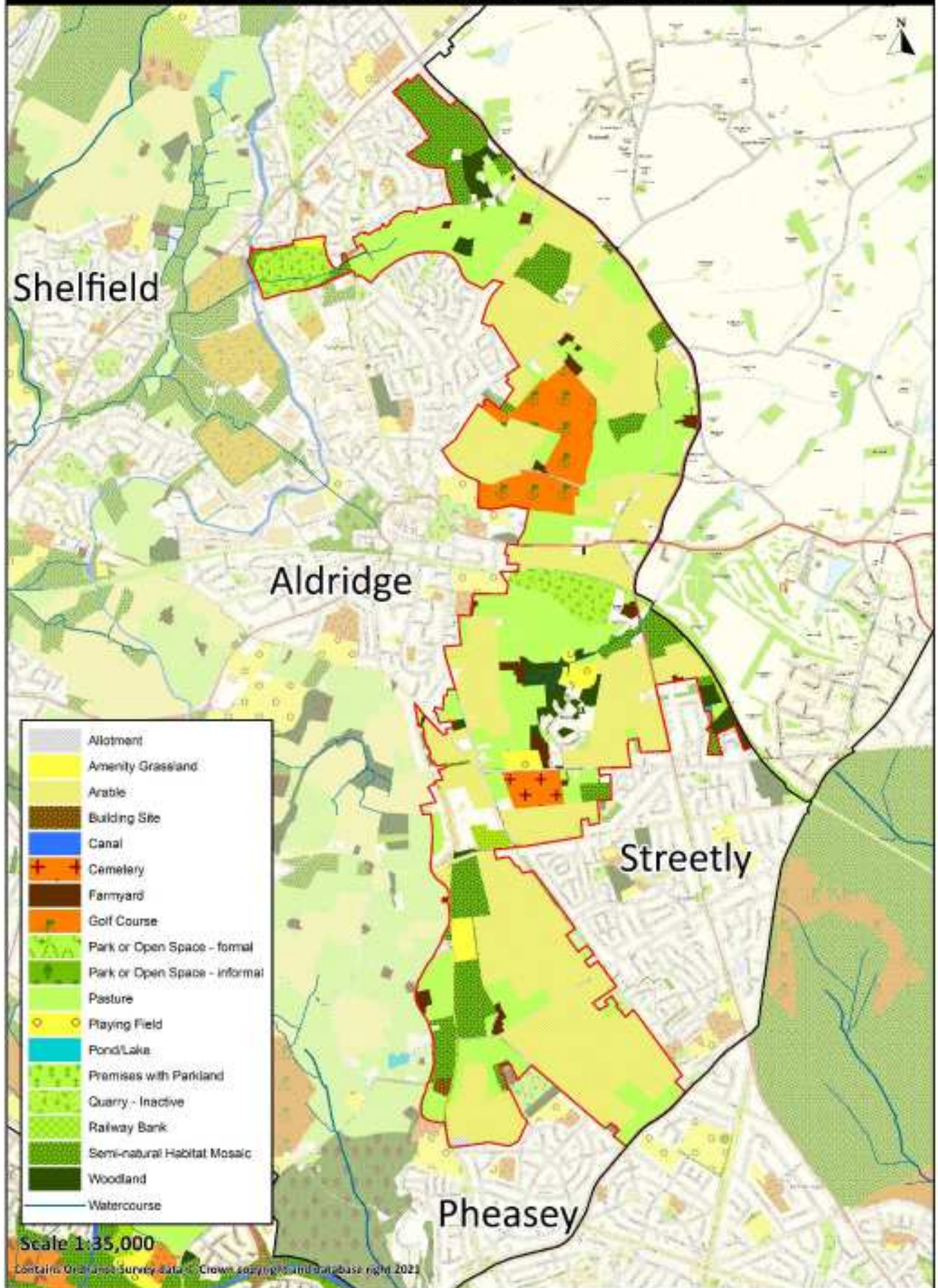
Geopark Sites

- Shire Oak Quarry Local Nature Reserve (GR SK060037)
- Barr Beacon Local Nature Reserve and Pinfold Lane Quarry (GR SP06099723)

Soils

The ecological sub-area is dominated by freely draining slightly acid sandy soils, whilst in the south-west is an area of freely draining very acid sandy and loamy soils. There are also small areas of freely draining slightly acid loamy soils, slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage, and in the east around the Fotherley Brook loamy and sandy soils with naturally high groundwater and a peaty surface.

CL05 - Barr Beacon, Druid's Heath and Shire Oak - Land Use



Historic Landscape Character Areas			
Reference	WL09	Name	Barr Beacon & Aldridge Fields
<p>The ecological sub-area is dominated by the eastern part of WL09 Barr Beacon & Aldridge Fields. This Character Area is situated in the east of the borough and is the most rural landscape in Walsall, with field systems covering 66% of its area. It has a mixed geology situated on mudstone and limestone in the west, sandstone, mudstone and conglomerate in the in the centre and sandstone in the east. The modern character of the area is defined largely by agricultural land and dispersed farms. The area also includes modern recreational land (golf courses), woodland, two areas of settlement, and an area of surviving ancient heathland (Barr Beacon).</p> <p>Historically the Character Area was in use as medieval open fields associated with Walsall, Aldridge, Stonnall and Great Barr. In the centre of the Character Area there were several medieval moated sites and many of the trackways and roads in this area are likely to be medieval in origin. The earliest settlement in the area is Great Barr, which was mentioned in a charter of AD 957. The surviving field systems in the Character Area were enclosed by either piecemeal enclosure in the late medieval/ early post-medieval periods from open field or were enclosed out of Aldridge Heath by Parliamentary Act.</p>			

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]			
Reference	AHHLV 19	Name	Shire Oak Quarry
A large former sand and gravel extraction site which started as a marl pit in the early 19th century.			
Reference	AHHLV 15	Name	Kings Hayes Historic Field System
A well-preserved historic field system, which contains evidence of medieval strip fields and a mixture of cropmark and earthwork ridge and furrow.			
Reference	APA 5	Name	Castlefort
A scheduled Iron Age hillfort called Castlefort (NHLE ref: 1017244). The scheduled hillfort covers a 1.5ha area and is set in a naturally defensible position.			
Reference	APA 19	Name	Earthwork Mound at Aldridge
A small Tumulus, possibly the remains of a Bronze Age Barrow or a Windmill mound.			
Reference	AHHLV 3	Name	Bourne Vale
Was part of the open fields associated with Aldridge during the medieval period. It has a high potential to contain prehistoric remains and contains an area of ancient woodland, eroded ridge and furrow.			
Reference	APA 3	Name	Bourne Pool Area
Contains a range of archaeological remains including the site of a medieval iron mill and pool, a 15th-century charcoal burning site, a possible burnt mound and a Mesolithic - Neolithic flint scatter.			
Reference	AHHLV 11	Name	Great Barr Beacon
Contains an isolated north-south ridge of Bunter Pebble Beds and is the possible site of an Anglo-Saxon beacon. A number of prehistoric and Roman finds have been recorded within the area and the AHHLV contains the proposed location of an Iron Age Hillfort although no evidence of the hillfort has been discovered here.			
Reference	AHHTV 1	Name	Scattered Settlement at Over End
Comprises the remains of a dispersed linear settlement formed from a cluster of buildings probably built in the 18th century.			

Waterbody Catchments			
River Basin District	Humber	Management Catchment	Tame, Anker and Mease
Waterbody Catchment	Overall Classification	Ecological	Chemical
Crane Brook - source to Fotherley Brook	Poor (2019)	Poor (2019)	Fail (2019)
Fotherley Brook from Source to Black-Bourne Brook	Poor (2019)	Poor (2019)	Fail (2019)
Plants Brook Catchment (trib of Tame)	Moderate (2019)	Moderate (2019)	Fail (2019)
Ford Brook from Source to River Tame	Moderate (2019)	Moderate (2019)	Fail (2019)
Tame - conf two arms to R Rea	Moderate (2019)	Moderate (2019)	Fail (2019)

Key Habitats [2]			
Broad Habitat Type	Arable & Horticultural	Priority Habitat	
Arable agriculture dominates much of the sub-area. These fields are mostly of 18 th and 19 th century Parliamentary enclosure origin. No Priority Habitat Arable Field Margins have been recorded.			
Broad Habitat Type	Boundary & Linear Features	Priority Habitat	Hedgerows
Numerous field boundary hedgerows throughout the sub-area associated with mostly rectilinear fields created through Parliamentary enclosure, though some may be from earlier piecemeal enclosure in the late medieval/ early post-medieval periods. Only a small proportion of the hedgerows have been assessed against the Local Wildlife Sites selection criteria and of these a number in the central and northern parts of the sub-area have been selected as SLINCs. These are described as having a diverse woody component with mature standards and an acidic field-layer. The designated hedgerows form the boundaries to roads and tracks and are likely to be of more ancient origin than the more numerous rectilinear field boundary hedgerows of 18 th and 19 th century enclosures.			
Broad Habitat Type	Standing Open Waters	Priority Habitat	Ponds
A number of ponds have been recorded within designated SINCs.			
Broad Habitat Type	Rivers and Streams	Priority Habitat	Rivers
Two headwater streams have been recorded in the sub-area. These are a tributary of the Anchor Brook which rises in the north-west of the sub-area and flows west, and the Fotherley Brook which rises in the centre of the sub-area in Corporation Wood and flows east.			
Broad Habitat Type	Acid Grassland	Priority Habitat	Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
Species-poor lowland dry acid grassland is present at Barr Beacon Local Nature Reserve. A small number of pastures within the sub-area are described as unimproved and supporting acid to neutral grassland with a diverse flora. Pastures are frequent throughout the sub-area and further areas of acidic grassland may be present. Some roadside grasslands may also support the Priority Habitat.			
Broad Habitat Type	Neutral Grassland	Priority Habitat	
Areas of grazed pastures, roadside grasslands and grasslands of more recent origin - such as at inactive quarries - may be neutral.			
Broad Habitat Type	Dwarf Shrub Heath	Priority Habitat	Lowland Heathland
There are small areas of lowland heathland at Barr Beacon Local Nature Reserve which have been created via the strewing of cuttings from nearby semi-natural lowland heathland sites. There are records of Heather and other heathland species at Branton Hill Quarry and Shire Oak Local Nature Reserve.			
Broad Habitat Type	Improved Grassland	Priority Habitat	Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh

Key Habitats [2]			
There are potentially areas of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh along the Footherley Brook.			
Broad Habitat Type	Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Priority Habitat	
The woodlands in the sub-area are mostly of planted or recent secondary origin and are described as having a botanically poor acidic field-layer. A number of these sites are designated as SLINC.			
Broad Habitat Type	Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Priority Habitat	Traditional Orchards
A number of small orchards associated with houses have been recorded on the Traditional Orchards HAP Inventory 2020.			

Key Species [3]	
Bird indicators	
Farmland	Common Reed Bunting, Eurasian Skylark, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Jackdaw, Kestrel, Lapwing, Linnet, Rook, Starling, Stock Dove, Whitethroat, Woodpigeon, Yellowhammer.
Woodland	Blackbird, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Common Chaffinch, Dunnock, Eurasian Blackcap, Eurasian Blue Tit, Eurasian Bullfinch, Eurasian Nuthatch, Eurasian Wren, European Green Woodpecker, Garden Warbler, Goldcrest, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Jay, Lesser Redpoll, Long-tailed Tit, Robin, Siskin, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Treecreeper, Willow Warbler.
Water & Wetland	Common Reed Bunting, Eurasian Coot, Grey Heron, Grey Wagtail, Kingfisher, Lapwing, Little Grebe, Mallard, Moorhen.
Other	Black-headed Gull, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Collared Dove, Common House Martin, Cuckoo, Eurasian Magpie, Greylag Goose, House Sparrow, Meadow Pipit, Mistle Thrush, Northern Raven, Pied Wagtail, Swallow, Swift, Whinchat.
Amphibians & Reptiles	
Amphibians	<i>Common Frog, Common Toad, Great Crested Newt, Smooth Newt.</i>
Reptiles	none
Mammals	
Bats	<i>Brown Long-eared Bat, Common Pipistrelle, Daubenton's Bat, Lesser Noctule, Natterer's Bat, Noctule Bat, Soprano Pipistrelle, Whiskered/Brandt's Bat.</i>
Other	<i>Eurasian Badger, West European Hedgehog.</i>
Fish	
Bony Fish	none
Jawless Fish	none
Invertebrates	
Assemblage type	
Flora (axiophytes)	
Woodland	<i>Ajuga reptans, Allium ursinum, Anemone nemorosa, Angelica sylvestris, Athyrium filix-femina, Brachypodium sylvaticum, Bromopsis ramosa, Caltha palustris, Carex paniculata, Carex remota, Carex sylvatica, Chaerophyllum temulum, Deschampsia flexuosa, Dioscorea communis, Equisetum sylvaticum, Equisetum telmateia, Frangula alnus, Lysimachia nemorum, Malus sylvestris, Mercurialis perennis, Moehringia trinervia, Oxalis acetosella, Persicaria hydropiper, Quercus petraea, Stellaria holostea, Teucrium scorodonia.</i>
Grassland	<i>Achillea ptarmica, Agrimonia eupatoria, Aira caryophylla, Ajuga reptans, Brachypodium sylvaticum, Caltha palustris, Campanula rotundifolia, Centaurium erythraea, Cerastium semidecandrum, Cirsium dissectum, Cirsium palustre, Dactylorhiza praetermissa, Danthonia decumbens, Daucus carota subsp. carota, Deschampsia flexuosa, Equisetum sylvaticum, Galium saxatile, Isolepis setacea, Leontodon hispidus, Lotus pedunculatus, Nardus stricta,</i>

	<i>Odontites vernus, Phleum bertolonii, Potentilla erecta, Potentilla sterilis, Rhinanthus minor, Sherardia arvensis, Silene flos-cuculi, Stellaria holostea, Succisa pratensis, Trifolium medium, Trifolium arvense, Trifolium medium, Vicia tetrasperma.</i>
Heathland	<i>Aira praecox, Calluna vulgaris, Campanula rotundifolia, Carex nigra, Carex pilulifera, Danthonia decumbens, Deschampsia flexuosa, Erica cinerea, Galium saxatile, Luzula multiflora, Nardus stricta, Potentilla erecta, Salix aurita, Teucrium scorodonia, Ulex gallii.</i>
Mires	<i>Achillea ptarmica, Angelica sylvestris, Athyrium filix-femina, Caltha palustris, Carex nigra, Carex panicea, Carex paniculata, Carex viridula subsp. oedocarpa, Cirsium dissectum, Cirsium palustre, Dactylorhiza praetermissa, Dryopteris carthusiana, Eleocharis palustris, Galium palustre, Glyceria declinata, Isolepis setacea, Juncus acutiflorus, Juncus bulbosus, Lotus pedunculatus, Luzula multiflora, Mentha arvensis, Persicaria hydropiper, Pulicaria dysenterica, Ranunculus hederaceus, Silene flos-cuculi, Stellaria alsine, Succisa pratensis, Triglochin palustre, Veronica beccabunga.</i>
Open Water	<i>Butomus umbellatus, Carex paniculata, Eleocharis palustris, Galium palustre.</i>
Post-industrial (water-stressed)	<i>Agrimonia eupatoria, Aira caryophyllea, Aira praecox, Centaurea scabiosa, Centaurium erythraea, Cerastium semidecandrum, Daucus carota subsp. carota, Deschampsia flexuosa, Filago vulgaris, Jacobaea erucifolia, Reseda lutea, Senecio viscosus, Sherardia arvensis, Trifolium arvense, Trifolium medium, Vicia tetrasperma.</i>
Cultivation	<i>Apera spica-venti, Fumaria muralis subsp. boraiei, Thlaspi arvense, Vicia tetrasperma.</i>

Ecological Connectivity

Local Habitat Network

Direct ecological connection to the local habitat network in Core Landscape 04 (Brownhills Common & Pelsall) and Core Landscape 06 (Park Lime Pits, Cuckoo's Nook & Great Barr Hall).

Midlands Heathland Heartland Lowland Heathland Nature Recovery Opportunity Mapping (EcoRecord and Staffordshire Ecological Record, 2021) identifies a heathland connectivity bottleneck between the two main heathland sites within the ecological sub-area (Shire Oak Park and Barr Beacon) which are located at the north and south of the sub-area respectively.

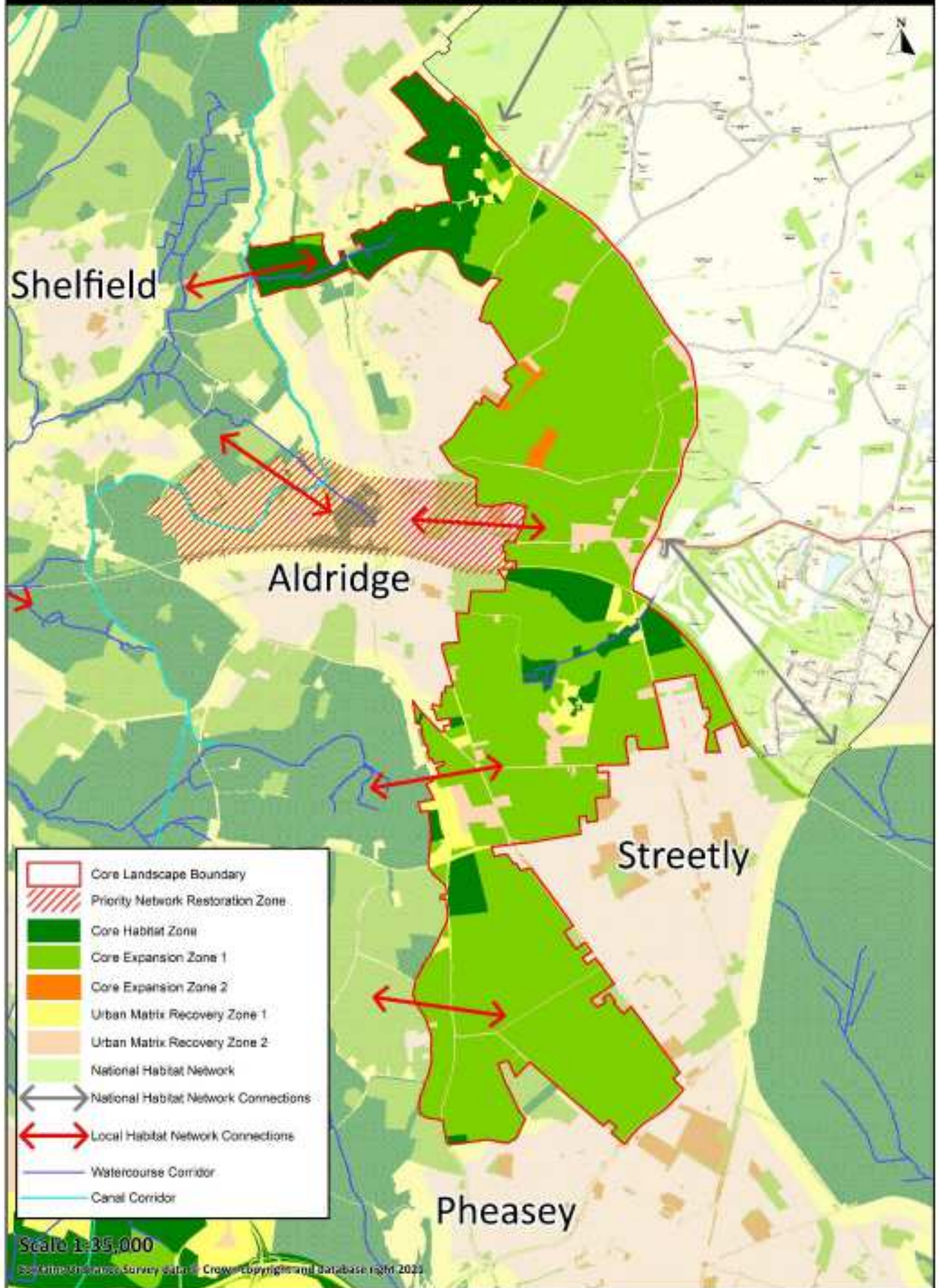
National Habitat Network

Direct ecological connection to the National Habitat Network in rural South Staffordshire.

Indirect connection to Sutton Park NNR (Birmingham) via Little Aston Golf Course and approximately 0.5 km urban development (Garden - large, mature). Midlands Heathland Heartland Lowland Heathland Nature Recovery Opportunity Mapping identifies a heathland connectivity bottleneck between Shire Oak Park and Sutton Park NNR (Birmingham).

Indirect connection to Cannock Chase SAC (Staffordshire) via rural heathland sites in Walsall and Staffordshire (inc. Chasewater and The Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI) identified in Midlands Heathland Heartland Lowland Heathland Nature Recovery Opportunity Mapping.

CL05 - Barr Beacon, Druid's Heath and Shire Oak - Components & Connectivity



Scale 1:35,000

Source: Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2023

Ecological Sub-area Opportunities

Focus Habitats		
Habitat	Action	Measure
Arable Field Margins	Create new	New habitat
Hedgerows	Improve management of existing	Habitat in good condition
	Restore through gapping up	Habitat in good condition
	Establish hedgerow trees	Habitat structure improved
Lowland Heathland	Improve habitat at existing sites	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Lowland dry acid grassland	Improve habitat at existing sites	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Coppice	Habitat structure improved
	Create woodland edge	Habitat structure improved
	Diversify woody component	Habitat structure improved
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Ponds	Restore existing	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Rivers	Improve soil management	Reduced silt inputs to watercourses
	Reduce artificial inputs	Improved chemical status
	Restore hydromorphology (naturalise modified channels)	Improved ecological status

Target Species	
Species/Species Group	Measure
Adder	Confirmed recent records
Breeding farmland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Breeding woodland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Brown Long-eared Bat	Confirmed recent records
Common Lizard	Confirmed recent records
Cuckoo	Confirmed recent records
Great Crested Newt	Increased abundance and number of sites
Heather	Increased abundance and number of sites
Hedgehog	Confirmed recent records
Woodland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Grassland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Mires axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Open Water axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Post-industrial axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance

Geodiversity		
Site	Action	Measure
Pinfold Lane Quarry	Vegetation removal/alternative Focus Habitat restoration or creation	Improved access to exposures/ alternative Focus Habitat restored or created
Shire Oak Quarry	Vegetation removal/alternative Focus Habitat restoration or creation	Improved access to exposures/ alternative Focus Habitat restored or created

Connectivity Opportunities	
Local Habitat Network	
Connection	Action
Within Core Landscape CL05	Heathland associated habitat enhancement and creation at arable and other undeveloped land including golf courses, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Woodland enhancement and planting on non-grassland or heathland sites.
	Field boundary hedgerow restoration and creation.
Priority Network Restoration Zone linking CL04 and CL05	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation on undeveloped land including parks, green spaces, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Woodland enhancement and small-scale planting.
	Planting of street trees along urban roads.
	Planting of standard trees in parks, green spaces and school grounds.
	Creation of new ponds.
	Enhancement of Daw End Branch Canal corridor including increasing extent of adjoining terrestrial habitats.
National Habitat Network	
Staffordshire Heathlands inc. Chasewater and The Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI	Heathland associated habitat enhancement and creation at arable and other undeveloped land including golf courses, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Field boundary hedgerow restoration and creation.
	Planting of street trees along urban roads.
	Creation of new ponds and wetlands.
Sutton Park	Heathland associated habitat enhancement and creation at arable and other undeveloped land including golf courses, school grounds and substantial road verges.
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Ecological Sub-area Statement of Biodiversity Priorities – Technical Appendix

Sub-area name	Park Lime Pits, Cuckoo's Nook, The Dingle & Great Barr Park	Sub-area ref.	CL06
Natural Character Area	Cannock Chase and Cank Wood	NCA ref.	67
Local Authority Area	Walsall	Area km²	11.38

Ecological Sub-area Description

Overview

Park Lime Pits, Cuckoo's Nook, The Dingle & Great Barr Park comprises an area of the Walsall green belt that stretches from Aldridge in the north to Great Barr in the south, and to the north-west reaches almost to Walsall town centre at Walsall Arboretum. To the east of the ecological sub-area lies Core Landscape CL05 Barr Beacon, Druid's Heath & Shire Oak, whilst the remainder of the area is surrounded by the urban settlements of Aldridge, Rushall, Walsall, Great Barr and Pheasey.

Historically within the parishes of Rushall, Walsall and the township of Great Barr, the field systems in the area were enclosed by either piecemeal enclosure in the late medieval/early post-medieval periods from open fields, or were enclosed by later Parliamentary Acts. There are a number of former limestone quarries which now comprise public open spaces and are designated for their wildlife value. A section of the Daw End Branch Canal and linked Rushall Canal bisect the northern part of the ecological sub-area.

Park Lime Pits, Cuckoo's Nook, The Dingle & Great Barr Park is distinguished from the adjoining Core Landscape CL05 Barr Beacon, Druid's Heath & Shire Oak by its underlying geology and derived soils which are less acidic and did not historically support heathland.

Land Use

Predominantly arable and pastoral agricultural with dispersed farms. There are clusters of small woodlands in the central and southern parts of the area, and newly planted woodland at public open space sites including Aldridge Airport and Walsall Arboretum Extension. Semi-natural mosaic habitat has developed at sites including Hay Head Wood and the former quarry at Park Lime Pits Local Nature Reserve. There are two golf courses (Calderfields Golf & Country Club and Great Barr Golf Club) and the formal urban park Walsall Arboretum is located in the north-west. In the south of the ecological sub-area are the landscaped grounds of Great Barr Hall which are managed as farmland and public open space.

Topography

Generally sloping from highest elevations of 190 meters in the east and south-west to the valleys of the Rough Brook, Hoar Brook and Perry Brook which lie at an elevation of 150-120 meters.

Geology

The bedrock in of the north-western part of the ecological sub-area is sedimentary mudstone, siltstone and sandstone of Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation formed between 319 and 318 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. The central area is Coalbrookdale Formation mudstone formed between 433.4 and 427.4 million years ago during the Silurian period, and the southern area Enville Member sandstone, conglomerate and argillaceous rocks formed between 309.5 and 272.3 million years ago during the Carboniferous and Permian periods.

Between the north-western and central areas there are several small formations of Lower Quarried Limestone formed between 430.5 and 427.4 million years ago during the Silurian period, and between the central and southern area a formation of Barr Limestone formed between 433.4 and 430.5 million years ago during the Silurian period.

The northern part of the ecological sub-area is overlain with superficial deposits of Devensian diamicton till, with some areas of glaciofluvial sand and gravel in the central and north-eastern sections, formed between 116 and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period.

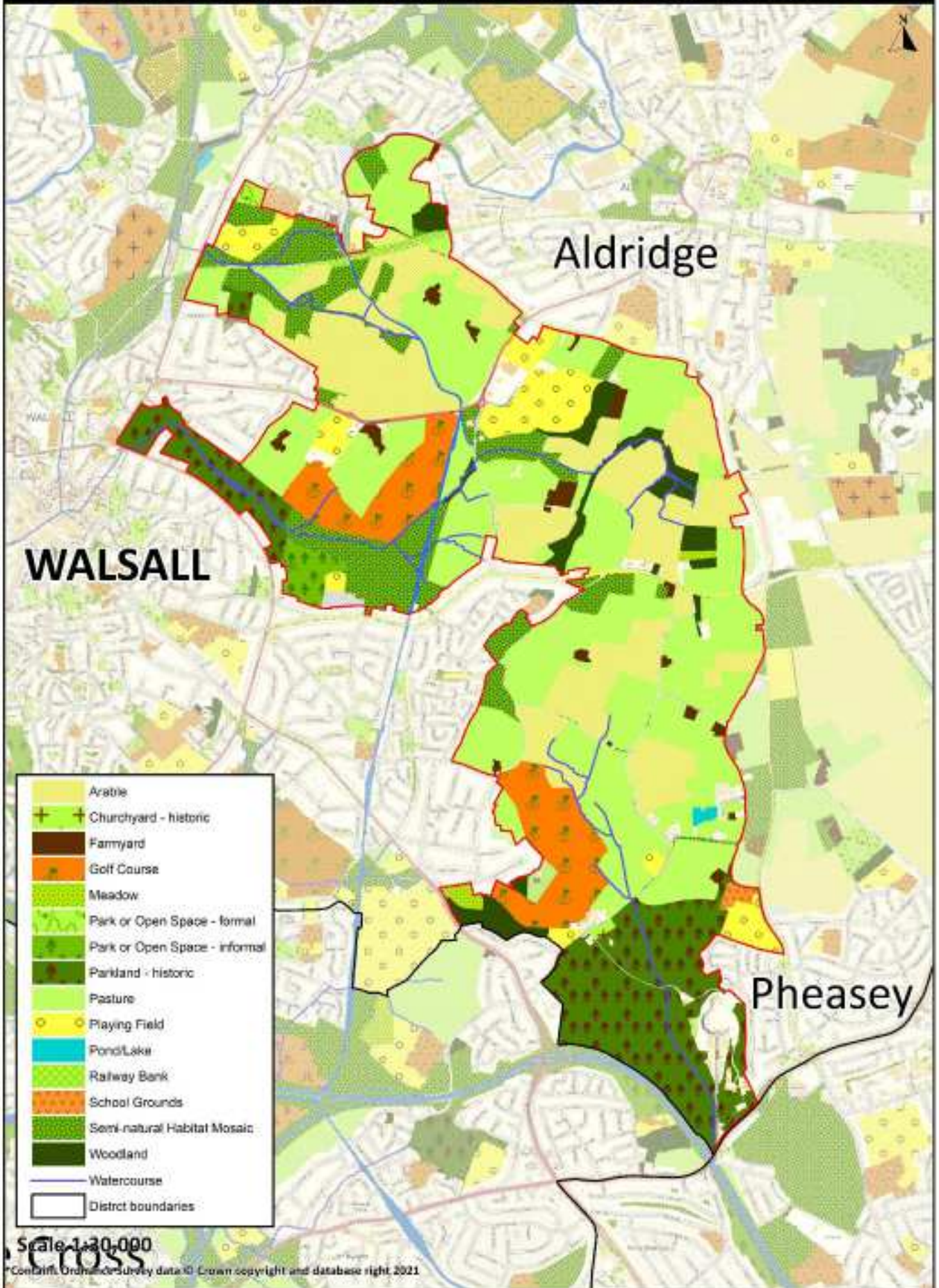
Geopark Sites

- Park Lime Pits Local Nature reserve (GR SK032001)
- Daw End Railway Cutting and Linley wood (GR SK035002)
- Walsall Arboretum (GR SP01959906)
- Hay Head and The Dingle LNR (GR SP050990)

Soils

The soils in the eastern section of the ecological sub-area are predominantly slowly permeable, seasonally wet and slightly acid, but base-rich loamy and clayey, with moderate fertility and impeded drainage. In the western section the soils are lowly permeable seasonally wet acid loamy and clayey soils, with low fertility and impeded drainage.

CL06 Park Lime Pits, Cuckoo's Nook, The Dingle & Great Barr Park- Land Use



Historic Landscape Character Areas

Reference	WL09	Name	Barr Beacon & Aldridge Fields
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The ecological sub-area is dominated by the western part of WL09 Barr Beacon & Aldridge Fields. This Character Area is situated in the east of the borough and is the most rural landscape in Walsall, with field systems covering 66% of its area. It has a mixed geology situated on mudstone and limestone in the west, sandstone, mudstone and conglomerate in the in the centre and sandstone in the east. Rushall Hall in the west lies on coal measures. The modern character of the area is defined largely by agricultural land and dispersed farms. The area also includes modern recreational land (golf courses), woodland, two areas of settlement, and an area of surviving ancient heathland (Barr Beacon).

Historically the Character Area was in use as medieval open fields associated with Walsall, Aldridge, Rushall, Stonnal and Great Barr. In the centre of the Character Area there were several medieval moated sites and many of the trackways and roads in this area are likely to be medieval in origin. The earliest settlements in the area are Great Barr, which was mentioned in a charter of AD 957, and Rushall, which was recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086. The surviving field systems in the Character Area were enclosed by either piecemeal enclosure in the late medieval/ early post-medieval periods from open field or were enclosed out of Aldridge Heath by Parliamentary Act.

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]

Reference	AHHLV 16	Name	Daw End Lime Works
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The AHHLV contains the remains of the Daw End, Winterley Lane, Phoenix, and Linley Limeworks and the associated Daw End Canal Branch. The limeworks were active in the area from the late 18th/early 19th century. A number of old tramways are recorded within the AHHLV (no longer visible) and there are records of Roman lime working within Linley Wood, although these may have been destroyed by later activity. The area is currently in agricultural use but evidence of the old lime workings pits can still be seen on the ground and there is a clear relationship between these features and the canal.

The AHHLV also contains a nationally important geoscientific site, featuring a reef formation from the marine Silurian. In the south east of the AHHLV there is an important unconformity within the Pennine Lower Coal Measures Strata and a geological fault.

Reference	APA 18	Name	Winterley Limeworks
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The APA is situated in an area formerly occupied by the Winterley Limeworks. The APA covers the site of eight limekilns fronting the canal, as shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map and an extant stable building formerly associated with works. Archaeological work associated with the limeworks showed that there were still extant remains here in 2013, but the area has subsequently been cleared without archaeological monitoring. The extent of the clearance is unknown and it is possible that the area containing the limekilns was not part of the land clearance. Accordingly, the APA has the potential to contain archaeological deposits associated with limekilns. Upstanding remains of the stables associated with the limeworks are present in the west part of the APA.

Reference	APA 7	Name	Rushall Hall Moated Manor Site
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The APA contains the remains of a 13th to 14th century moated manor site, a medieval to post-medieval graveyard and earthworks associated with mining activities within the area. To the north west of the manor site, there are cropmark remains of a ring ditch and an enclosure, which are suggestive of below-ground archaeological remains. There is potential for archaeological remains associated with the manor site to be present and also some potential for organic preservation within the infilled moat. The graveyard has the potential to contain 17th -19th century burials. The site of the manor house, Rushall Hall (NHLE ref: 1013153) is a scheduled monument and dates to at least the 13th century. A scheduled burial mound (hlaew) with an encircling ditch (NHLE ref: 1009772) is also present within the APA.

Reference	APA 8	Name	Lavender Limeworks
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The APA contains the surviving remains of the Lavender Limestone Pit, including the site of a late 19th or early 20th century engine house, mine shafts and condensers pits. These features are associated with the Lavender Mine, which was opened in 1902 to extract 'Fuller's Earth' (a deposit of bentonic (green) clay). The APA covers the area of the limeworks shown on the first edition OS map. The area contains surviving remains of an old works and has the potential to contain further archaeological evidence of post-medieval lime working.

Reference	APA 9	Name	Iron Furnace at Ladypool
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Historic Environment Area Designations [1]			
<p>The APA contains the site of an iron furnace, which is recorded as standing in a park near Mill Meadow. The APA covers Ladypool and an area of slag, cinder and charcoal to the west of the pool. Ladypool, is believed to be a medieval fishpond that was later used to power the iron forge. The APA contains a concentration of finds, which suggests the location of an early post-medieval forge that was still standing in the 17th century. The APA has the potential to contain archaeological remains associated with the forge. There is also potential for archaeological evidence associated with the creation of Ladypool, although no trace of the original sluice or other structures associated with the pool or iron works has been observed. The APA has the potential to contain waterlogged deposits which may contain preserved organic remains.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 17	Name	Park Lime Pits
<p>The AHHLV contains a flooded limestone quarry adjacent to the Daw End Branch Canal (opened in 1800). The area is thought to have been in use for mineral extraction during the Roman and medieval periods and fell out of use in the mid-19th century when it was converted into a park. The quarry pits were flooded at this time. Old brick kilns are recorded within the park on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map. The AHHLV has the potential to contain evidence of quarrying activity from many periods, which may provide insight into technological development.</p>			
Reference	APA 10	Name	Cropmarks north of Berryfields Farm
<p>The APA demarks an area of cropmarks recorded on the HER. These remains suggest the presence of surviving archaeological remains. While the presence of the remains has not been ground truthed by excavation, the morphology of the cropmarks suggests the presence of a large prehistoric enclosure.</p>			
Reference	AHHTV 14	Name	Daw End Branch Canal
<p>The AHHTV covers part of the Daw End Branch Canal (opened in 1800), which runs off from the Wyrley and Essington Canal Extension at Catshill down to the Longwood Junction. The canal has suffered from mining subsidence and now the embankments are much taller than when they were constructed. The AHHTV contains the Grade II listed building Brawns Work Bridge, and the Grade II listed Riddion Bridge. It also contains the locally listed buildings Stone House and a 19th century Lock-Keepers Cottage. In addition, the AHHTV has the potential to contains non-designated historically important buildings such as locks, canal bridges and industrial buildings associated with the early usage of the canal. These nationally and locally important buildings are directly associated with the creation and development of the canal and make a positive contribution to the quality of the historic environment.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 14	Name	Bosty Lane, Ridge and Furrow and Settlement
<p>The AHHLV contains the remains of Aldridge Lodge (now Lodge Farm) and the Grade II listed buildings Bosty Lane Farmhouse and its associated barn. Both settlements are shown on the 1817 Ordnance Surveyors Drawings (OSD) of the area. Aldridge Lodge was originally an early 19th century shooting lodge; the lodge was demolished in 1958 but associated outbuildings may survive within the AHHLV. The remains of a ha-ha are recorded within the mature trees in the AHHLV. A prominent earthwork bank appears on LiDAR along the eastern boundary of the APA, perhaps marking the extent of the Park. Bosty Lane Farmhouse lies to the east and has been dated to the mid-18th century. Both settlements are surrounded by land that contains well-preserved ridge and furrow earthworks, surviving relics of the pre-enclosure landscape</p>			
Reference	APA 22	Name	Aldridge Airfield
<p>The APA covers the extent of Aldridge Airfield, which was in use between 1935 and 1956 and still retains an aircraft hangar as a heritage asset. Aerial photographs show circular cropmark remains and an old field system within the area. The cropmarks suggest that there may be surviving features such as ring-ditches within the airfield. The line of the runway can also be observed as a cropmark running through the APA and there is potential for archaeological evidence relating to the WWII airfield.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 26	Name	Wigmore Farm Ridge and furrow
<p>The AHHLV contains the several areas of surviving earthwork ridge and furrow and a (possibly) medieval holloway. These features are surviving remnants of the open field system within the area. The field system in this area appears to date back to at least the 19th century, and may form part of a pre-enclosure field system that has been subject to some more recent boundary loss. Remnants of a watercourse and two ponds (fish ponds?) of unknown date are present within the AHHLV.</p>			
Reference	APA 11	Name	Calderfields Moated Site
<p>The APA contains earthwork remains of a possible medieval moated site. The moat is depicted on the 1st edition OS Map but no associated buildings are present. There is no evidence of the site on Yates' 1778 map of Staffordshire or the Ordnance Surveyors Drawings (OSD) of the area. Earthwork remains and water channels associated with the moated site are shown on the Environment Agency LiDAR survey of the area and the APA has</p>			

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]			
<p>the potential to contain below-ground archaeological remains associated with a medieval /post medieval building. The infilled water channel/moat may contain rare preserved organic remains and could contain environmental evidence that would provide insight into the local environment and land use in the area during the medieval period. To the south of the moated site is an area of associated ridge and furrow earthworks.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 4	Name	Cuckoo's Nook and Hay Head Lime Works
<p>The AHHLV contains the remains of the Hay Head Lime Works and an area of Ancient Woodland (Cuckoo's Nook). The ancient woodland has the potential to contain features associated with medieval and post-medieval woodland management. A scatter of Neolithic finds was recorded in the field to the south, highlighting the potential for the preservation of earlier remains in this area away from the former quarry pits. The AHHLV has the potential to contain archaeological remains associated with the limeworks, and contains the earthwork remains of several quarry pits and spoil heaps associated with the limeworks. The pond within the woodland was part of the canal network until it was cut off from the main line in the 1930s. The woodland has been subject to limited modern disturbance and has the potential for below ground archaeological remains such as kilns and other industrial structures.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 6	Name	Birch Wood
<p>Birch Wood is primarily an oak woodland overcrowded with birch and rowan. The AHHLV is semi-natural ancient woodland and on the western side of the woodland there is a large pool. The AHHLV has the potential to contain well-preserved prehistoric and Roman archaeological remains (although none are currently known), and may contain features associated with medieval and post-medieval woodland management. Ancient woodlands represent surviving patches of the historic landscape that date back to the early post-medieval period.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 7	Name	Potters Wood and Moat Farm Ridge and Furrow
<p>The AHHLV contains an area of ridge and furrow earthworks centred on APA 13 Moat Farm Moated site. The ridge and furrow earthworks are possible remnants of the medieval open field system, and are directly associated with the medieval moated site. To the north of APA 13 is Potters Wood, an area of semi-natural ancient woodland, which has the potential to contain well-preserved prehistoric and Roman archaeological remains (although none are currently known). The woodland may contain features associated with medieval and post-medieval woodland management.</p>			
Reference	APA 13	Name	Moat Farm Moated site
<p>The APA contains the scheduled moated site at Moat Farm (NHLE ref: 1008547). The site encloses an area of around 0.25ha. Access to the interior is via a brick bridge across the eastern arm of the moat, which is thought to mark the site of the original entrance. During the early 14th century the site, known as the Moat House at Heyhead, was in the possession of Robert Stapleton. Nineteenth century sources indicate that at this date there was a house, the southern end of which was half-timbered, within the moated area. LiDAR clearly shows earthwork remains associated with the moat. The APA has been extended to cover the area around the moated site, which may contain associated archaeological remains.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 10	Name	Great Barr Deer Park
<p>The AHHLV contains the remains of Great Barr Deer Park which is predominantly in use as a golf course. The western part of the former deer park has been developed for housing. Ground works associated with the housing development would have removed any archaeological remains and earthworks associated with deer park, and accordingly this part of the deer park has been excluded from the AHHLV. The golf course contains archaeological remains and earthworks associated with the medieval landscape, including areas of ridge and furrow and the remains of the later park pale. These archaeological features contribute to the archaeological interest of the AHHLV and illustrate the development of this landscape throughout the medieval and post-medieval period.</p> <p>Great Barr Deer Park is first mentioned in 1335 and the 1850s Tithe Map of Aldridge shows a number of fields labelled as 'Old Barr Park'. The probable extent of the park is visible on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map which shows a series of hedgerows enclosing all but the south-east of an oval area, five furlongs long by five furlongs wide. This oval shape is typical of a medieval deer park and surviving elements of the park pale are present within the modern hedgerows of the AHHLV, including a large bank (5m wide by 0.5m). The modern hedgerows within the area preserve the form and extent of the medieval deer park allowing it to be appreciated within the modern landscape. The hedgerows contain earthwork remains of the park pale which are of archaeological interest.</p>			

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]

The AHHLV also contains archaeological evidence of medieval and post-medieval agricultural activity. Cropmark remains indicative of below ground archaeological features show the extent of possible enclosure or an early field system within the golf course and earthwork remains of ridge and furrow cultivation are recorded in places across the former park. The line of the stream passing through the former deer park is also of archaeological interest as it was apparently imposed during landscaping works associated with the Great Barr Estate. The earthwork and below ground archaeological remains within the golf course provide evidence for past land usage and animal management and contribute to the archaeological and historic interests of the AHHLV. The AHHLV contains area of ridge and furrow, which could represent the pre-parkland landscape.

Reference	APA 15	Name	Site of Great Barr medieval settlement
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The APA contains the possible site of the medieval village of Great Barr. A settlement is recorded at Great Barr in the Domesday Survey. The exact location of the settlement is unknown but it is believed to be in the vicinity of the Church and Manor House, which both fall within the APA. There is a large bank and ditch in the field to the north of Chapel Farm and this may be the remains of either a park pale associated with the deer park or a holloway and possible house platforms. The APA contains the 19th Century Great Barr Chapel, which is believed to be built on the site of a 12th century chapel. The site of a medieval manor is also recorded at this location although there are no above ground remains present. The APA has the potential to contain early medieval or medieval settlement remains, medieval to post medieval burials and remains of a park pale associated with the medieval deer park.

Reference	AHHTV 1	Name	Scattered Settlement at Over End
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The AHHTV comprises the remains of a dispersed linear settlement formed from a cluster of buildings probably built in the 18th century. The buildings labelled as Over End are shown on the 1816 Ordnance Surveyors Drawings of the area. The AHHTV contains four Grade II listed buildings Old Hall Farmhouse, Barn Approximately 20m north of Old Hall Farmhouse, The Pinfold and Coxfold Farmhouse. In addition, it contains several non-designated buildings, which are shown on the early 19th century Ordnance Survey maps including Crook Farm (formerly Brook Farm now called Old Court Farm), Beacon Farm and Crook Cottage Farm. These traditional farm buildings survive within the AHHTV with some modern additions preserving the historic layout of the farmsteads. An area of ridge and furrow lies to the west of Old Hall Farmhouse; this has been included in the AHHTV as it is a relic of an earlier land use within the area and can shed light on past land management and use.

Reference	APA 16	Name	Great Barr Moated site
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The APA contains the remains of a possible medieval moated site. The eastern part of the moat is still water-filled but the rest is dry. Ordnance Surveyors drawings of the site show a building at approximately this location, Barr Hall, but this is not shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map. The APA contains earthwork remains of a moat, and has the potential to contain the remains of medieval or post-medieval buildings. The moat has the potential to contain waterlogged deposits.

Waterbody Catchments

River Basin District	Humber	Management Catchment	Tame, Anker and Mease
Waterbody Catchment	Overall Classification	Ecological	Chemical
Ford Brook from Source to River Tame	Moderate (2019)	Moderate (2019)	Fail (2019)
River Basin District	Humber	Management Catchment	Tame, Anker and Mease
Waterbody Catchment	Overall Classification	Ecological	Chemical
Tame - conf two arms to R Rea	Moderate (2019)	Moderate (2019)	Fail (2019)

Key Habitats [2]			
Broad Habitat Type	Arable & Horticultural	Priority Habitat	
Arable agriculture covers about 20% of the sub-area. These fields are mostly of 18 th and 19 th century Parliamentary enclosure origin. No Priority Habitat Arable Field Margins have been recorded.			
Broad Habitat Type	Boundary & Linear Features	Priority Habitat	Hedgerows
<p>Numerous field boundary hedgerows throughout the sub-area associated with piecemeal enclosure in the late medieval/early post-medieval periods or later Parliamentary enclosure. Early enclosures are represented by irregular field patterns and these are likely to be the more ecologically valuable hedgerows in the area. The remaining field pattern is more regular and planned, though significantly less rectilinear than the adjoining Core Landscape 05 Barr Beacon, Druid's Heath and Shire Oak and therefore likely pre-dates this. Hedgerows trees are frequent throughout, with these apparently more abundant in areas of earlier enclosure.</p> <p>Only a small proportion of the hedgerows have been assessed against the Local Wildlife Sites selection criteria, and of these a number in the northern and central parts of the sub-area have been selected as SLINCs. These are described as well-maintained mature hedgerows with traditional bank and ditch systems and good species-richness.</p>			
Broad Habitat Type	Standing Open Waters	Priority Habitat	Ponds
There are a number of field and farm ponds scattered throughout the ecological sub-area, with a concentration in the south, a number of which are designated as SLINC. Ponds at Park Lime Pits LNR and Walsall Arboretum are flooded lime workings. There are large ornamental pools in the landscaped former grounds of Great Barr Hall that are fed by the Perry Brook.			
Broad Habitat Type	Rivers and Streams	Priority Habitat	Rivers
Three watercourse and their minor tributaries rise in the ecological sub-area. These are an unnamed tributary of the Ford Brook in the north which feeds the ponds at Park Lime Pits; the Hoar Brook which flows east-west through the northern part of the area and feeds the ponds at Walsall Arboretum; and the Perry Brook which flows north-south through the southern part of the area and feeds the pools in the landscaped former grounds of Great Barr Hall. Survey information for the watercourses is not known, however, each of these appears artificially straightened along at least some of its length.			
Broad Habitat Type	Neutral Grassland	Priority Habitat	
Permanent pastures comprise up to approximately 40% of the ecological sub-area. A number of these are designated as SINC or SLINC and are described as neutral, dry to marshy, relatively species-rich and with associated features including ponds and hedgerows.			
Broad Habitat Type	Calcareous Grassland	Priority Habitat	Lowland calcareous grassland
There are small areas of calcareous grassland at the former limestone extraction sites Park Lime Pits LNR, Jack Holes and Hay Head Wood. These have developed on lime-rich spoil and are described as botanically-rich with associated species including Quaking Grass, Woolly Thistle, Greater Knapweed and Hoary Ragwort.			
Broad Habitat Type	Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Priority Habitat	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
A number of woodlands in the ecological sub-area are designated by Natural England as ancient woodland. In the central area there is a group of woodlands that are described as botanically-rich and influenced by the presence of lime. One of these, The Dingle, is thought to be of more recent origin and to have developed spontaneously on the site of a former limestone quarry. In the landscaped former grounds of Great Barr Hall in the south of the ecological sub-area is a further group of woodlands. These may be ancient and modified and extended for aesthetic landscape purposes, or may be of wholly recent planted origin.			
Broad Habitat Type	Standing Open Water and Canals	Priority Habitat	
A section of the Daw End Branch Canal and linked Rushall Canal bisect the northern part of the ecological sub-area. The Daw End Branch was constructed to transport extracted lime and is linked to the Wyrley and Essington Canal to the north. The canal has generally good quality water supporting a diverse aquatic flora, with a range of associated habitats within the corridor. The Rushall Canal was constructed later to link the Daw End Branch to the			

Key Habitats [2]

Tame Valley Canal and follows a linear route. Sharing a water source with the Daw End Branch, this supports a similarly diverse aquatic flora.

Key Species [3]**Bird indicators**

Farmland	Common Reed Bunting, Eurasian Skylark, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Grey Partridge, Jackdaw, Kestrel, Lapwing, Linnet, Rook, Starling, Stock Dove, Tree Sparrow, Western Yellow Wagtail, Whitethroat, Woodpigeon, Yellowhammer.
Woodland	Blackbird, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Common Chaffinch, Dunnock, Eurasian Blackcap, Eurasian Blue Tit, Eurasian Bullfinch, Eurasian Nuthatch, Eurasian Wren, European Green Woodpecker, Goldcrest, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Jay, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Lesser Whitethroat, Long-tailed Tit, Marsh Tit, Redstart, Robin, Siskin, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Spotted Flycatcher, Tawny Owl, Treecreeper, Willow Tit, Willow Warbler.
Water & Wetland	Common Reed Bunting, Common Sandpiper, Eurasian Coot, Great Crested Grebe, Grey Heron, Grey Wagtail, Kingfisher, Lapwing, Little Grebe, Mallard, Moorhen, Mute Swan, Reed Warbler, Sand Martin, Sedge Warbler, Snipe, Teal, Tufted Duck, Western Yellow Wagtail.
Other	Black-headed Gull, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Collared Dove, Common House Martin, Cuckoo, Eurasian Magpie, Greylag Goose, Hobby, House Sparrow, Meadow Pipit, Mistle Thrush, Northern Raven, Pied Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Swallow, Swift, Whinchat.

Amphibians & Reptiles

Amphibians	Common Frog, Common Toad, Great Crested Newt, Smooth Newt.
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Reptiles	none
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Mammals

Bats	Brandt's Bat, Brown Long-eared Bat, Common Pipistrelle, Daubenton's Bat, Lesser Horseshoe Bat, Lesser Noctule, Nathusius's Pipistrelle, Natterer's Bat, Noctule Bat, Serotine, Soprano Pipistrelle, Whiskered Bat.
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Other	Eurasian Common Shrew, European Otter, European Water Vole, Polecat, West European Hedgehog.
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Fish

Bony Fish	none
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Jawless Fish	none
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Invertebrates**Assemblage type****Flora (axiophytes)**

Woodland	<i>Adoxa moschatellina</i> , <i>Ajuga reptans</i> , <i>Allium ursinum</i> , <i>Anemone nemorosa</i> , <i>Angelica sylvestris</i> , <i>Athyrium filix-femina</i> , <i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i> , <i>Bromopsis ramosa</i> , <i>Caltha palustris</i> , <i>Cardamine amara</i> , <i>Carex remota</i> , <i>Carex sylvatica</i> , <i>Chaerophyllum temulum</i> , <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> , <i>Dioscorea communis</i> , <i>Dryopteris affinis</i> subsp. <i>affinis</i> , <i>Equisetum sylvaticum</i> , <i>Equisetum telmateia</i> , <i>Festuca gigantea</i> , <i>Filipendula ulmaria</i> , <i>Fragaria vesca</i> , <i>Frangula alnus</i> , <i>Galium odoratum</i> , <i>Lamiastrum galeobdolon</i> subsp. <i>montanum</i> , <i>Lysimachia nemorum</i> , <i>Malus sylvestris</i> , <i>Melica uniflora</i> , <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> , <i>Milium effusum</i> , <i>Moehringia trinervia</i> , <i>Oxalis acetosella</i> , <i>Poa nemoralis</i> , <i>Quercus petraea</i> , <i>Sanicula europaea</i> , <i>Stellaria holostea</i> , <i>Teucrium scorodonia</i> , <i>Tilia cordata</i> , <i>Torilis japonica</i> , <i>Valeriana officinalis</i> , <i>Veronica montana</i> , <i>Viola reichenbachiana</i> .
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Grassland	<i>Agrostis canina</i> , <i>Ajuga reptans</i> , <i>Alchemilla filicaulis</i> subsp. <i>vestita</i> , <i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i> , <i>Briza media</i> , <i>Caltha palustris</i> , <i>Centaureum erythraea</i> , <i>Cerastium semidecandrum</i> , <i>Cirsium palustre</i> , <i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i> , <i>Dactylorhiza praetermissa</i> , <i>Danthonia decumbens</i> , <i>Daucus carota</i> subsp. <i>carota</i> , <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> , <i>Equisetum sylvaticum</i> , <i>Euphrasia officinalis</i> agg., <i>Filipendula ulmaria</i> , <i>Fragaria vesca</i> , <i>Galium saxatile</i> , <i>Leontodon hispidus</i> , <i>Linum catharticum</i> , <i>Lotus pedunculatus</i> , <i>Odontites vernus</i> , <i>Parentucellia viscosa</i> , <i>Persicaria bistorta</i> , <i>Phleum bertolonii</i> , <i>Pimpinella saxifraga</i> , <i>Plantago media</i> , <i>Polygala vulgaris</i> , <i>Potentilla anglica</i> , <i>Potentilla erecta</i> , <i>Potentilla sterilis</i> , <i>Rhinanthus minor</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i> , <i>Silaum silaus</i> , <i>Silene flos-cuculi</i> , <i>Stachys officinalis</i> , <i>Stellaria holostea</i> , <i>Succisa pratensis</i> , <i>Trifolium medium</i> .
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Heathland	<i>Agrostis canina, Calluna vulgaris, Carex nigra, Danthonia decumbens, Deschampsia flexuosa, Galium saxatile, Potentilla erecta, Salix aurita, Teucrium scorodonia, Ulex gallii, Vaccinium myrtillus.</i>
Mires	<i>Agrostis canina, Alchemilla filicaulis subsp. vestita, Angelica sylvestris, Athyrium filix-femina, Briza media, Caltha palustris, Cardamine amara, Carex acutiformis, Carex nigra, Carex panicea, Carex pseudocyperus, Carex rostrata, Cirsium palustre, Dactylorhiza fuchsii, Dactylorhiza praetermissa, Epilobium palustre, Equisetum fluviatile, Equisetum palustre, Filipendula ulmaria, Galium palustre, Galium palustre subsp. palustre, Glyceria notata, Hypericum tetrapterum, Jacobaea aquatica, Juncus acutiflorus, Lotus pedunculatus, Pulicaria dysenterica, Ranunculus aquatilis, Ranunculus hederaceus, Silene flos-cuculi, Sparganium emersum, Stachys palustris, Stellaria alsine, Succisa pratensis, Valeriana officinalis, Veronica beccabunga.</i>
Open Water	<i>Bidens cernua, Bidens tripartita, Butomus umbellatus, Carex acutiformis, Carex pseudocyperus, Equisetum fluviatile, Galium palustre, Galium palustre subsp. palustre, Glyceria notata, Potamogeton lucens, Potamogeton perfoliatus, Ranunculus aquatilis, Sagittaria sagittifolia, Schoenoplectus lacustris.</i>
Post-industrial (water-stressed)	<i>Centaurea scabiosa, Centaurium erythraea, Cerastium semidecandrum, Daucus carota subsp. carota, Deschampsia flexuosa, Erophila verna, Fragaria vesca, Jacobaea erucifolia, Linum catharticum, Ophrys apifera, Parentucellia viscosa, Silene vulgaris, Silene vulgaris subsp. vulgaris, Trifolium arvense, Trifolium medium, Trifolium micranthum, Vicia tetrasperma.</i>
Cultivation	<i>Stachys arvensis, Thlaspi arvense, Veronica polita, Vicia tetrasperma</i>

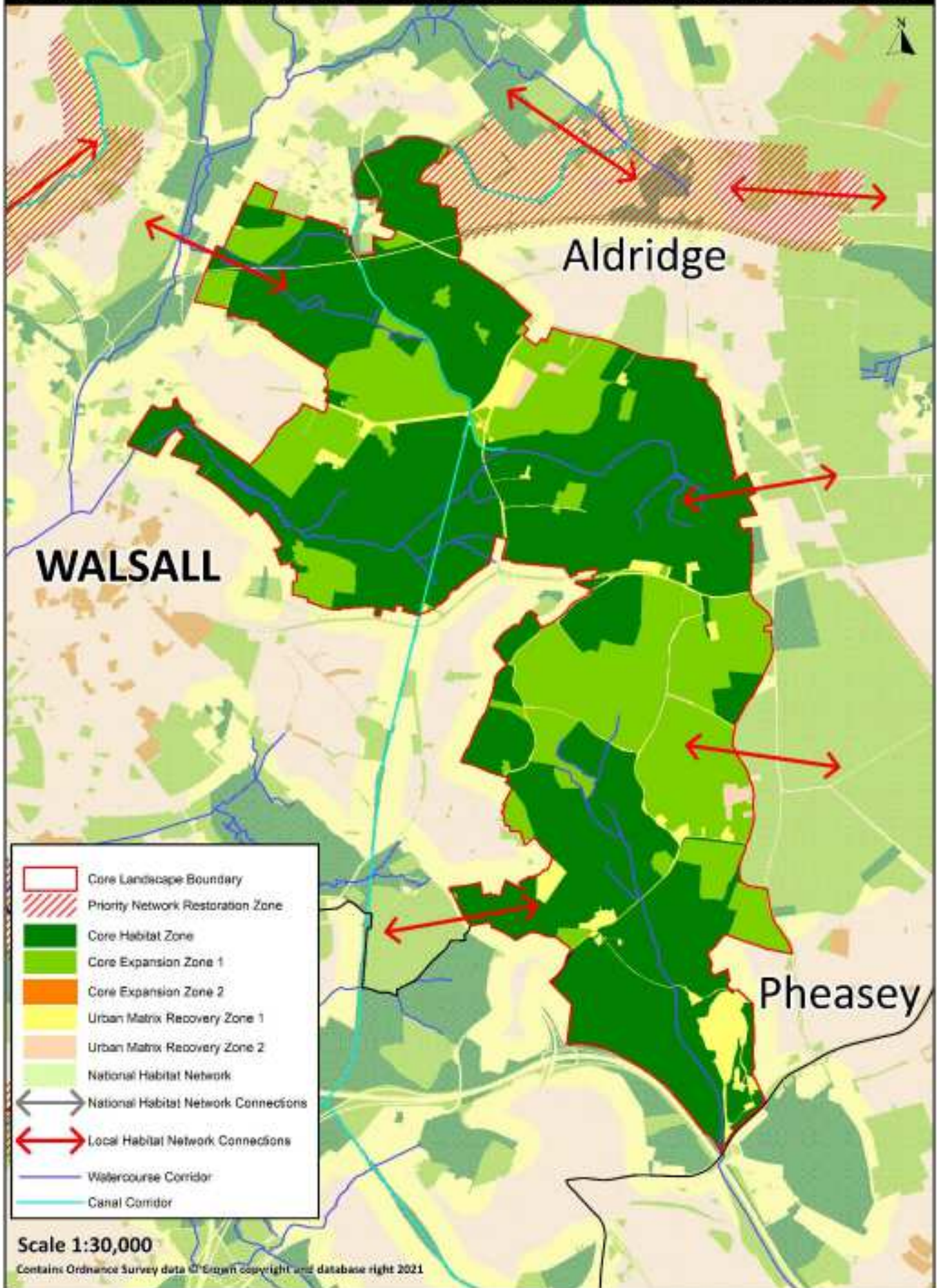
Ecological Connectivity

Local Habitat Network

Direct ecological connection to the local habitat network in Core Landscape 05 Barr Beacon, Druid's Heath & Shire Oak with which it shares an extensive boundary. Direct connection via narrow corridors to Core Landscape 04 Brownhills Common & Pelsall and Core Landscape 07 Sandwell Valley.

National Habitat Network

Park Lime Pits, Cuckoo's Nook, The Dingle & Great Barr Park is entirely surrounded by other core landscapes or urban settlements and therefore does not link directly to the National Habitat Network.



Ecological Sub-area Opportunities

Focus Habitats		
Habitat	Action	Measure
Canals	Identify and reduce artificial inputs	Improved chemical status
Lowland calcareous grassland	Restore existing	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Hedgerows	Improve management of existing	Habitat in good condition
	Restore through gapping up	Habitat in good condition
	Establish hedgerow trees	Habitat structure improved
Lowland meadows	Enhance existing neutral grasslands	Increased floral diversity
	Create new species-rich neutral grasslands	Increased floral diversity and habitat structure improved
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Coppice	Habitat structure improved
	Create woodland edge	Habitat structure improved
	Diversify woody component	Habitat structure improved
Ponds	Restore existing	Habitat in good condition
	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Rivers	Restore hydromorphology (naturalise modified channels)	Improved ecological status
	Reduce artificial inputs	Improved chemical status

Target Species	
Species/Species Group	Measure
Barn Owl	Confirmed recent records
Bats	Increased abundance of confirmed species
Breeding farmland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Breeding water & wetland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Breeding woodland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Cuckoo	Confirmed recent records
European Otter	Increased signs, confirmed breeding population
European Water Vole	Confirmed recent records
Great Crested Newt	Increased abundance and number of breeding ponds
Hedgehog	Confirmed recent records
Grassland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Heathland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Mires axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Open Water axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Post-industrial axiophytes	
Woodland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance

Geodiversity		
Site	Action	Measure
n/a		

Connectivity Opportunities	
Local Habitat Network	
Connection	Action
Within Core Landscape CL06	Restoration of modified channel watercourse.
	Species-rich calcareous neutral grassland enhancement and creation.
	Plantation woodland enhancement.
	Creation of new ponds.
	Field boundary hedgerow restoration and creation.

Information and Data Sources		
	Source	Date
Landuse	Ecological Evaluation of Birmingham and Black Country GIS data set, EcoRecord.	2021
Topography	OS Terrain 50 GIS data set, Ordnance Survey.	2017
Geology	British Geological Society 1:625,000 bedrock & superficial GIS web map services from BGS website: http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html	2021
	Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark sites names and location information https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/bcg/	2021
Soils	Soilscapes, Cranfield Soil & Agricultural Institute website: http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/	2021
Species and Habitats	EcoRecord species and habitat databases.	2021
Ecological Connectivity	EcoRecord, The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country (2021) <i>Draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map</i>	2021
	EcoRecord et al. (2021) <i>Midlands Heathland Heartland Lowland Heathland Nature Recovery Opportunity Mapping</i> .	2021
Historic Landscape Character Areas	Wolverhampton City Council (2010) <i>Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation</i> [data-set]. York: Archaeology Data Service [distributor] https://doi.org/10.5284/1000030	2010
Historic Environment Area Designations	Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study, Oxford Archaeology.	2019

[1] HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AREA DESIGNATIONS

The Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study has divided the Historic Environment Area Designations into four categories:

Archaeological Priority Areas (APA): sites with a high potential for archaeological remains of regional or national significance that have not been considered for designation as scheduled monuments, or where there is insufficient data available about the state or preservation of any remains to justify a designation. APAs are likely to have high archaeological and historic interest.

Areas of High Historic Townscape Value (AHHTV): areas where built heritage makes a significant contribution to local character and distinctiveness. The significance of AHHTVs is likely to be derived primarily from their architectural and historic interests. However, these areas may also have artistic and archaeological interests. Areas of High Historic Townscape Value are not limited to towns or cities, they also include villages, hamlets and areas of industry where the built heritage is considered to make a positive contribution to the historic environment of an area.

Designed Landscapes of High Historic Value (DLHHV): landscape areas that make an important contribution to local historic character but do not meet the criteria for inclusion on the national Register for Parks and Gardens. The significance of these areas is likely to arise from their historic, artistic and architectural interests, although such areas may also contain remains of archaeological interest.

Areas of High Historic Landscape Value (AHHLV): these recognise the quality of the wider landscape and their relative values. The significance of these areas arises from the natural and historic features contained within them (e.g. woodland, watercourses, hedgerows, and archaeological features). The significance of these areas is likely to be derived from their archaeological and historic interests.

[2] KEY HABITATS follows the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Broad & Priority Habitat definitions

This is a UK-habitat classification prepared by the UK Biodiversity Group that classifies all terrestrial and freshwater habitats in the UK into 37 broad habitat types. UK BAP Priority Habitats are a range of semi-natural habitat types that were identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action. The original Priority Habitat list was created between 1995 and 1999 and revised in 2007. The list of Priority Habitats has been used to help draw up statutory lists of habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The suite of habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity (formerly Priority Habitats) nest into the defined Broad Habitat Types.

[3] KEY SPECIES

Bird Indicators: Species listed under UK Biodiversity Indicator C5, Birds of the wider countryside and at sea (JNCC). The indicator shows changes in the breeding population sizes of common native birds of farmland and woodland and of freshwater and marine habitats in the UK.

Amphibians & Reptiles: All amphibian and reptile species native to the UK are included.

Mammals: Those protected by UK or EU law, included on the current list of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006 or amended), and those included on the latest B&BC LBAP list of Priority Habitats/Species.

Fish: Those protected by UK or EU law, included on the current list of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006 or amended), and those included on the latest B&BC LBAP list of Priority Habitats/Species.

Invertebrates: Pantheon Assemblage Types Analysis.

Flora (axiophytes): Those included on the Birmingham & the Black Country list of axiophytes (administered by EcoRecord) by four locally defined habitat types.

Ecological Sub-area Statement of Biodiversity Priorities – Technical Appendix

Sub-area name	Sandwell Valley	Sub-area ref.	CL07
Natural Character Area	Cannock Chase and Cank Wood	NCA ref.	67
Local Authority Area	Sandwell and Walsall	Area km²	9.01

Ecological Sub-area Description

Overview

Sandwell Valley comprises a large area of open space at the approximate centre of the Birmingham and Black Country conurbation, and forms part of the Black Country's eastern boundary with Birmingham. The ecological sub-area is bisected by the M5 and M6 motorways, and almost entirely surrounded by urban development. A section of the River Tame flows west-east through the area and there are numerous small tributaries of this. The Tame Valley Canal traverses the northern part of the area (through the M5/M6 motorway junction), as does an active railway line.

The landscape of the ecological sub-area remains dominated by the pre-urban field pattern, though only parts of this remain actively farmed. In the south of the area are the remains of Sandwell Hall country house and earlier Benedictine priory, as well as features such as pools associated with the 18th century designed landscape. Ancillary buildings, stables and parts of a walled garden remain standing and have been restored for use as Sandwell Park Farm visitor centre. To the north of Swan Pool are the remains of Sandwell Park Colliery which was operational in the early 20th century.

A large floodwater storage lake (Forge Mill Lake) was constructed alongside the River Tame in the east of the ecological sub-area in the early 1980s. Part of the lake and the surrounding area are managed as RSPB Sandwell Valley nature reserve.

Land Use

Much of the southern part of Sandwell Valley is accessible open space including at Forge Mill Lake, Priory Woods and Sot's Hole Local Nature Reserves, as well as the more formal Dartmouth Park and King George Playing Fields in the south-west. There are also two golf courses (Sandwell Park and Dartmouth Golf Course) and West Bromwich Crematorium. The remainder of the southern section is farmed, with ley pasture, arable and permanent pasture all present.

Further north is the large triangular junction of the M5 and M6 motorways within which is a sewage treatment works, whilst to the north of the M6 is an electricity sub-station. The remainder of the northern section is comprised of further informal accessible open space, school grounds, Walsall Golf Course and a number of sports pitches, as well as Peak House Farm field system of irregular pre-enclosure fields which are actively farmed (see Historic Environment Area Designations).

Topography

The highest elevations within Sandwell Valley are at the southern and close to the northern end at an elevation of 170 meters. From these points the land slopes gently down to the valley of the River Tame which is at an elevation of 100 metres.

Geology

The southern part of the ecological sub-area is dominated by sedimentary Alveley Member mudstone bedrock formed between 309.5 and 308 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. The northern part is dominated by Coalbrookdale Formation mudstone formed between 433.4 and 427.4 million years ago during the Silurian period, with a small area of Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation Mudstone, siltstone and sandstone formed between 319 and 318 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. In the central area there is a formation of Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation mudstone, siltstone and sandstone formed between 318 and 309.5 million years ago during the Carboniferous period.

Parts of the southern area are overlain with superficial deposits of Devensian diamicton till formed between 116 and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period, and Mid Pleistocene Diamicton till formed between 860 and 116 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period. Following the course of the River Tame there are river terrace deposits of sand and gravel formed between 2.588 million years ago and the present during the

Quaternary period, and more recent alluvial clay, silt, sand and gravel formed between 11.8 thousand years ago and the present.

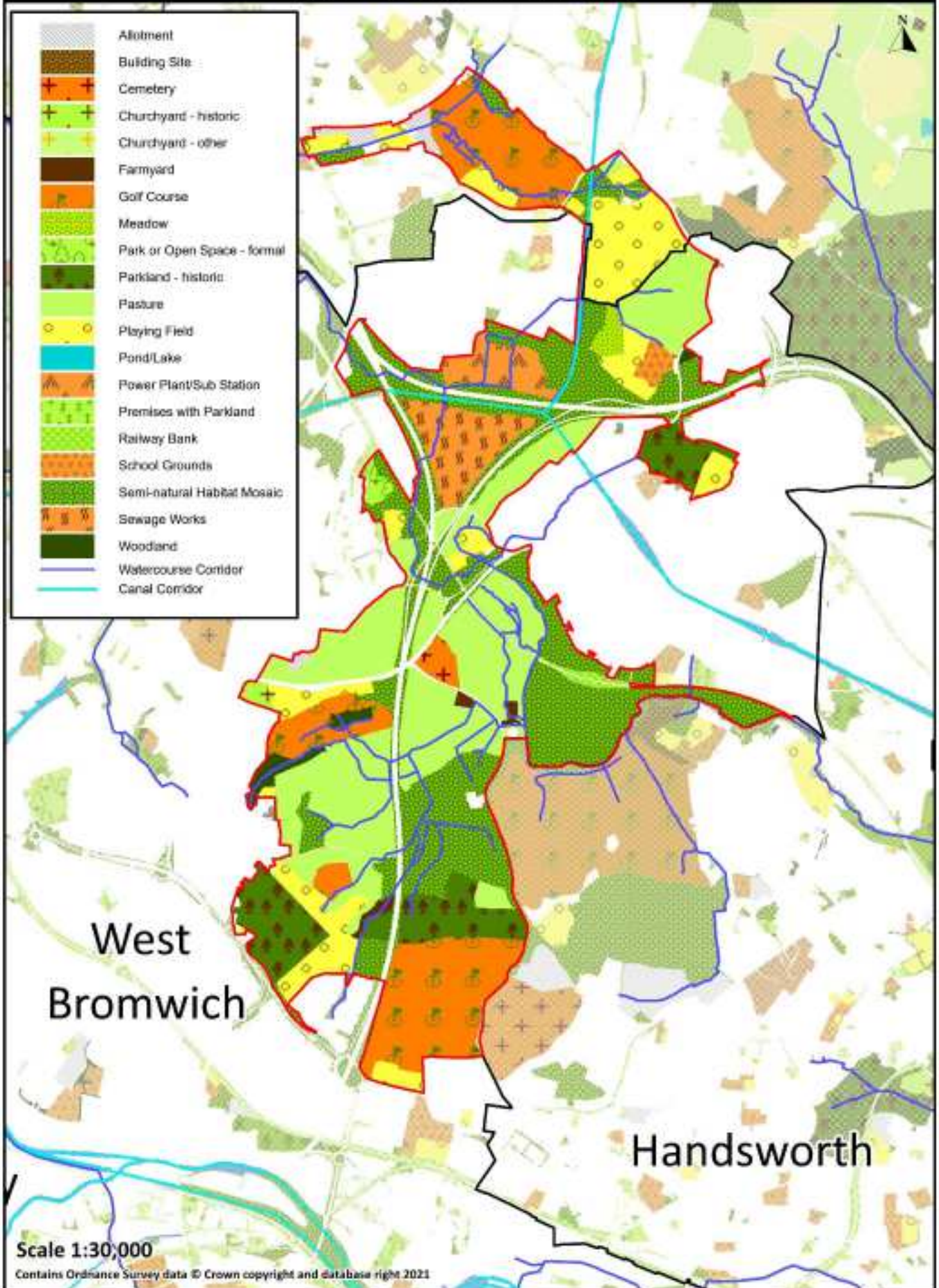
Geopark Sites

- Sandwell Valley Country Park (GR SP01939149)

Soils

The ecological sub-area is dominated by slowly permeable seasonally wet, slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils with moderate fertility and impeded drainage. In the north the soils are slowly permeable, seasonally wet acid loamy and clayey soils with low fertility and impeded drainage, and in the central area around Forge Mill Lake the soils are naturally wet, very acid sandy and loamy soils with very low fertility.

CL07 - Sandwell Valley - Land Use



Historic Landscape Character Areas			
Reference	SD07	Name	Sandwell Valley
<p>The central and southern part of the ecological sub-area is coterminous with character areas SD07 Sandwell Valley, which is dominated by Sandwell Valley Country Park and agricultural land. The Character Area was originally part of the estate owned by the Earls of Dartmouth from the early 18th century. Sandwell Hall (demolished in 1928) was built by the first Earl on the site of the 12th century Benedictine priory close to the Sand Well spring. The Character Area contains the Registered Park and Garden Dartmouth Park which became public park in 1877.</p>			
Reference	SD02	Name	Newton, Hamstead & Great Barr
<p>Lying to the north of Sandwell Valley and comprising the north-eastern part of the ecological sub-area id SD02 Newton, Hamstead & Great Barr. The modern character of the area is dominated by 20th century residential housing, with areas of surviving fields in the north-west of the character area that continue beyond the Borough boundary into Walsall (WL09). Until the 20th century this area was largely agricultural, crossed by the Tame Valley Canal which opened in 1844.</p>			
Reference	SD05	Name	Yew Tree
<p>A small part of the ecological sub-area to the north of the M5/M6 junction lies within SD05 Yew Tree. The historic character of the area was defined almost entirely of agricultural land much of it worked from Delves Farm and Yew Tree Farm. Residential development began to cover this area after the First World War. The Tame Valley Canal, on the southern edge of the area, was opened in 1844 and, as such was one of the last Black Country canals.</p>			
Reference	WL11	Name	South East Walsall
<p>The northern part of the ecological sub-area lies within WL11 South East Walsall. During the medieval period this area was dominated by open fields with a small manor house or settlement at The Delves. There was also a large deer park to the west of Great Barr, although its extent is unknown. By the mid-18th century a mill had been established at New Mills in the south-west of the area and a country house has been constructed by the Delves. At this time the landscape was still largely agricultural and by the late 18th century- early 19th century woodland had been established in the south-east of the area near Great Barr and two further country houses had been built.</p>			

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]			
Reference	APA 14	Name	Shustoke Farm Moated site
<p>The APA contains earthworks remains of a possible medieval moated site. The moat is shown on the 1841 Tithe map. LiDAR shows remnants of the moat to the north and west and its survival was confirmed by a field survey carried out in 2001. There is therefore the potential for archaeological remains associated with the moat and potential medieval and post-medieval buildings. To the north of the moated site are the earthwork remains of three fish ponds linked to the moated site by leats. The moat, fish ponds and leats have the potential to contain waterlogged remains and there is potential for organic preservation.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 25	Name	Peak House Farm Field System
<p>The AHHLV contains a well-preserved example of a pre-enclosure field system. Evidence of ridge and furrow is visible across the site as cropmarks (but no earthworks appear to survive). Prehistoric finds have been recovered within this area and cropmarks indicative of below-ground archaeological remains have also been identified, highlighting the archaeological potential of the area. Many of the field boundaries are marked by drainage ditches linked to the moated site to the south (APA 24) and a number of hedgerows are recorded as ancient hedgerows. LiDAR shows a small mound in the AHHLV (NGR 403764 295377).</p>			
Reference	APA 24	Name	Peak House Farm Moated Site
<p>The APA contains the remains of a possible moated site. The Environment Agency LiDAR shows the earthwork remains of a moat and a possible building platform within the APA. There is no building at this location on the 1817 OSD map, or 1st-4th edition OS maps, suggesting that the moated site is of medieval or early post-medieval date. The APA has the potential to contain below-ground archaeological remains associated with the manor house and the moat. The moat may contain waterlogged deposits, which would provide insight into land use in the area during the medieval period.</p>			

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]			
Reference	APA 27	Name	The River Tame
<p>The APA contains part of the route of the River Tame; there is considered to be potential for previously unknown prehistoric activity (including Bronze Age burnt mounds) and environmental evidence present associated with the former water course. Prior to the industrial revolution the land adjacent to the river would have been utilised for mills and other water-based industries. Accordingly, there is potential for archaeological remains associated with these features to survive. Aerial photographs show a number of tributaries and drainage channels associated with the river, which may be possible mill leats. The APA contains the infilled Old Forge Mill pool. There is potential for archaeological remains associated with the Old Forge and Mill. Part of the area was disturbed during the 19th century by the Grand Union Line Railway. However, the majority of the area remains relatively undisturbed. Some ridge and furrow earthworks are present within the APA.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 26	Name	Wigmore Farm Ridge and Furrow
<p>The AHHLV contains the several areas of surviving earthwork ridge and furrow and a (possibly) medieval holloway. These features are surviving remnants of the open field system within the area. The field system in this area appears to date back to at least the 19th century, and may form part of a pre-enclosure field system that has been subject to some more recent boundary loss. Remnants of a watercourse and two ponds (fish ponds?) of unknown date are present within the AHHLV.</p>			
Reference	APA 25	Name	All Saints Church
<p>The APA contains All Saints Church and Graveyard. All Saints Church is situated on the site of a medieval church, elements of the 14th or 15th century tower survive within the present day Church. The church is surrounded by a graveyard, which has the potential to contain human remains dating from the medieval to post-medieval periods.</p>			
Reference	APA 26	Name	Sot's Hole Stream
<p>The APA contains the remains of a burnt mound and a stone mound as well as several recorded scatters of prehistoric flints. The APA is situated upon sand and gravel deposits resulting in the formation of natural springs in prehistoric times, which would have made it a focus for activity. The HER records a number of patches of ridge and furrow within the APA although these were not visible on the Environment Agency LiDAR survey of the site. Several drainage channels are evident within the APA and fish ponds and a dam are recorded in the very western part of the area (shown on 1817 Ordnance Survey drawings of the area) near Parsons Farm. The ponds and dams were used to control the flow of water supplied to the dams along the River Tame and its tributaries.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 48	Name	Chambers Wood
<p>The AHHLV is an area of semi-natural ancient woodland. Accordingly, it has the potential to contain well preserved archaeological remains (although none are currently known), and may contain features associated with medieval and post-medieval woodland management. Areas of semi-natural ancient woodland are areas of natural woodland which may have been subject to some previous woodland management and have been in use as woodland since at least the 1600s. Accordingly these areas have the potential to contain well preserved archaeological remains. Areas of ancient woodland represent surviving patches of the historic landscape that date back to the medieval or early post-medieval periods.</p>			
Reference	AHHLV 50	Name	Dartmouth Golf Course Wood
<p>The AHHLV is an area of semi-natural ancient woodland. Accordingly, it has the potential to contain well preserved archaeological remains (although none are currently known), and may contain features associated with medieval and post-medieval woodland management. Areas of semi-natural ancient woodland are areas of natural woodland which may have been subject to some previous woodland management and have been in use as woodland since at least the 1600s. Accordingly these areas have the potential to contain well preserved archaeological remains. Areas of ancient woodland represent surviving patches of the historic landscape that date back to the medieval or early post-medieval periods.</p>			
Reference	DLHHV 1	Name	Sandwell Park
<p>The DLHHV was originally part of the estate associated with Sandwell Priory. It was later sold to the Earl of Dartmouth, who in turn sold it to West Bromwich Council in 1947. The park today contains remnants of the mid-18th century designed landscape although the original design has been eroded by the construction of later transport infrastructure. During the inter-war period, parts of the site were used as a colliery. Several earlier features associated with the parkland including ornamental pools (Swan and Pleasure pools), an ice house and a ha-ha (a bank and ditch used to keep out animals) survive within the present day landscape. Swan Pool started life as a mill pool before being extended twice, firstly to take the extra water from the adjacent mines and secondly as a leisure facility. Earlier archaeological remains such as the scheduled remains of Sandwell Hall and the earlier Benedictine Priory, which is a scheduled monument (NHLE 1017763) and areas of non-designated ridge and</p>			

Historic Environment Area Designations [1]			
furnow are also present, highlighting various land uses within the park over time. A number of archaeological features including a prehistoric burnt mound have been recorded within the site, further highlighting the archaeological interest of the area. The scheduled monument has a high level of archaeological interest, and could be directly impacted by unsympathetic development e.g. ground works.			

Waterbody Catchments			
River Basin District	Humber	Management Catchment	Tame Anker and Mease
Waterbody Catchment	Overall Classification	Ecological	Chemical
Tame - confluence two arms to R Rea Water Body	Moderate (2019)	Moderate (2019)	Moderate (2019)

Key Habitats [2]			
Broad Habitat Type	Woodland	Priority Habitat	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
There are two areas of woodland designated as Ancient Semi-natural Woodland in the south-west of the ecological sub-area (Chambers Wood and Bluebell Wood). There are further small areas of mature Oak woodland scattered through the south-west which may be ancient or old plantations.			
Broad Habitat Type	Woodland	Priority Habitat	
Younger woodland is frequent throughout Sandwell Valley, either as plantations or spontaneous woodland on abandoned sites. Planted areas include around Forge Mill Lake, along fairways in the area's many golf courses, around the sewage works and along some of the motorway embankments. Older ornamental plantations are found around the parkland of the former Sandwell Hall. Young woodland now occupies the site of the former Sandwell Park Colliery, though it is not known if this is planted or spontaneous.			
Broad Habitat Type	Grassland	Priority Habitat	Lowland meadows
There are small areas of remnant meadow in Priory Woods Local Nature Reserve, though the extent or condition of this habitat is not known. The irregular fields of the Peak House Farm field system have in recent years been cut for hay, however, these are not floristically diverse and are likely to have been managed as pasture prior to this.			
Broad Habitat Type	Grassland	Priority Habitat	
Grassland of various sward types dominates much of Sandwell Valley. Permeant pasture exists in the southern part of the ecological sub-area, with the surviving ridge and furrow at the Wigmore Farm being a notable surviving remnant of the former open field system of the area. Throughout the publicly accessible parts of Sandwell Valley there are areas of irregularly managed grassland that is relatively species-poor and rank. There are also significant areas of regularly mown grassland in the formal parks and on the golf course fairways.			
Broad Habitat Type	Boundary	Priority Habitat	Hedgerows
Numerous field boundary hedgerows exist throughout the ecological sub-area, either demarcating the boundaries of existing fields or as remnants within areas now used for alternative purposes. It is thought that most of Sandwell Valley was enclosed from mediaeval open fields (see Wigmore Farm), however, the fields at Peak House Farm are considered to be an uncommon example of earlier enclosure. Here the field-pattern is notably more irregular and the hedgerows have been allowed to grow to a substantial size.			
Broad Habitat Type	Freshwater	Priority Habitat	Rivers
A stretch of the River Tame runs through Sandwell Valley, entering the ecological sub-area in the north-west adjacent to the M6 and meandering south and then eastwards around Forge Mill Lake and exiting into Birmingham. The channel is heavily modified, being of uniform width and with raised flood banks, with few natural erosion and depositional features, and very little aquatic vegetation. The catchment is classified Moderate status by the Environment Agency and suffers from urban diffuse pollution. There are numerous minor channels which flow into the River Tame from across the ecological sub-area. These range from unmodified watercourses to artificial drainage channels.			

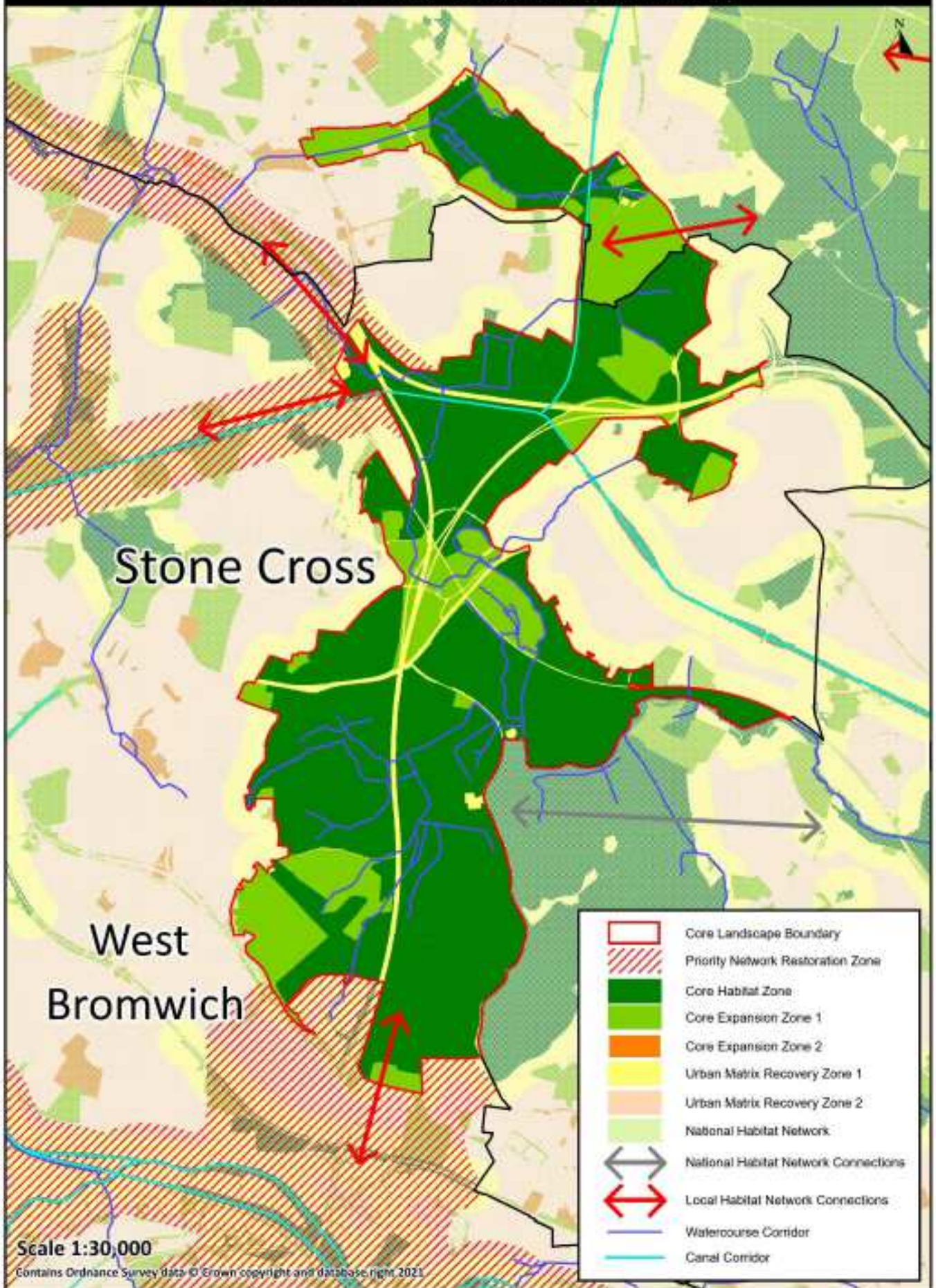
Broad Habitat Type	Freshwater	Priority Habitat	Eutrophic standing waters
<p>There are a number of artificial standing waters throughout Sandwell Valley. These include an ornamental pool and boating lake in Dartmouth Park, the large floodwater storage lake Forge Mill Lake, and those associated with the former grounds of Sandwell Hall (Pleasure Pool and Swan Pool). These vary significantly in ecological value, with significant works having been undertaken for the benefit of wetland birds at RSPB Sandwell Valley (parts of Forge Mill Lake), and wetland and adjacent terrestrial vegetation having developed at the Pleasure Pool. Conversely the boating lake has artificial banks, and very few naturalised features and associated species.</p>			

Key Species [3]	
Bird indicators	
Farmland	Common Reed Bunting, Eurasian Skylark, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Jackdaw, Kestrel, Lapwing, Rook, Starling, Stock Dove, Western Yellow Wagtail, Whitethroat, Woodpigeon, Yellowhammer.
Woodland	Blackbird, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Common Chaffinch, Dunnock, Eurasian Blackcap, Eurasian Blue Tit, Eurasian Bullfinch, Eurasian Nuthatch, Eurasian Wren, European Green Woodpecker, Garden Warbler, Goldcrest, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Jay, Lesser Redpoll, Lesser Whitethroat, Long-tailed Tit, Marsh Tit, Redstart, Robin, Siskin, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Spotted Flycatcher, Tawny Owl, Treecreeper, Willow Tit, Willow Warbler.
Water & Wetland	Cetti's Warbler, Common Merganser, Common Reed Bunting, Common Sandpiper, Eurasian Coot, Great Crested Grebe, Grey Heron, Grey Wagtail, Kingfisher, Lapwing, Little Egret, Little Grebe, Mallard, Moorhen, Mute Swan, Oystercatcher, Redshank, Reed Warbler, Sand Martin, Sedge Warbler, Snipe, Teal, Tufted Duck, Western Yellow Wagtail.
Other	Black-headed Gull, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Collared Dove, Common House Martin, Eurasian Magpie, Gadwall, Golden Plover, House Sparrow, Meadow Pipit, Mistle Thrush, Northern Raven, Peregrine, Pied Wagtail, Pochard, Red Kite, Shelduck, Shoveler, Stonechat, Swallow, Swift, Whinchat.
Amphibians & Reptiles	
Amphibians	Common Frog, Common Toad, Great Crested Newt, Smooth Newt.
Reptiles	none
Mammals	
Bats	Brown Long-eared Bat, Common Pipistrelle, Daubenton's Bat, Lesser Noctule, Nathusius's Pipistrelle, Noctule Bat, Soprano Pipistrelle.
Other	Eurasian Badger, Eurasian Common Shrew, European Water Vole, Harvest Mouse, West European Hedgehog.
Fish	
Bony Fish	none
Jawless Fish	none
Invertebrates	
Assemblage type	
Flora (axiophytes)	
Woodland	<i>Ajuga reptans</i> , <i>Allium ursinum</i> , <i>Anemone nemorosa</i> , <i>Angelica sylvestris</i> , <i>Athyrium filix-femina</i> , <i>Blechnum spicant</i> , <i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i> , <i>Bromopsis ramosa</i> , <i>Caltha palustris</i> , <i>Carex paniculata</i> , <i>Carex remota</i> , <i>Carex sylvatica</i> , <i>Chrysosplenium oppositifolium</i> , <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> , <i>Dioscorea communis</i> , <i>Dryopteris affinis</i> , <i>Epipactis helleborine</i> , <i>Equisetum telmateia</i> , <i>Festuca gigantea</i> , <i>Filipendula ulmaria</i> , <i>Fragaria vesca</i> , <i>Frangula alnus</i> , <i>Galium odoratum</i> , <i>Lysimachia vulgaris</i> , <i>Malus sylvestris</i> , <i>Melica uniflora</i> , <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> , <i>Milium effusum</i> , <i>Molinia caerulea</i> , <i>Oxalis acetosella</i> , <i>Persicaria hydropiper</i> , <i>Quercus petraea</i> , <i>Sorbus torminalis</i> , <i>Stellaria holostea</i> , <i>Teucrium scorodonia</i> , <i>Tilia cordata</i> , <i>Torilis japonica</i> , <i>Valeriana officinalis</i> , <i>Veronica montana</i> .
Grassland	<i>Achillea ptarmica</i> , <i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i> , <i>Agrostis canina</i> , <i>Aira caryophyllea</i> , <i>Ajuga reptans</i> , <i>Blackstonia perfoliata</i> , <i>Blechnum spicant</i> , <i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i> , <i>Caltha palustris</i> , <i>Carex disticha</i> , <i>Centaureum erythraea</i> , <i>Cirsium palustre</i> , <i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i> , <i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii x praetermissa = D. x grandis</i> , <i>Dactylorhiza praetermissa</i> , <i>Daucus carota subsp. carota</i> , <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> , <i>Euphrasia officinalis agg.</i> , <i>Festuca filiformis</i> , <i>Filipendula ulmaria</i> , <i>Fragaria vesca</i> , <i>Galium mollugo subsp. erectum</i> , <i>Galium saxatile</i> , <i>Lathyrus nissolia</i> , <i>Leontodon hispidus</i> , <i>Linum catharticum</i> , <i>Lotus pedunculatus</i> , <i>Nardus stricta</i> , <i>Odontites vernus</i> , <i>Ornithopus perpusillus</i> , <i>Persicaria bistorta</i> ,

	<i>Phleum bertolonii</i> , <i>Potentilla anglica</i> , <i>Potentilla erecta</i> , <i>Potentilla sterilis</i> , <i>Rhinanthus minor</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i> , <i>Silene flos-cuculi</i> , <i>Stachys officinalis</i> , <i>Stellaria holostea</i> , <i>Succisa pratensis</i> , <i>Trifolium medium</i> .
Heathland	<i>Agrostis canina</i> , <i>Aira praecox</i> , <i>Blechnum spicant</i> , <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> , <i>Carex nigra</i> , <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> , <i>Festuca filiformis</i> , <i>Galium saxatile</i> , <i>Juncus squarrosus</i> , <i>Molinia caerulea</i> , <i>Nardus stricta</i> , <i>Ornithopus perpusillus</i> , <i>Potentilla erecta</i> , <i>Salix aurita</i> , <i>Teucrium scorodonia</i> , <i>Ulex gallii</i> .
Mires	<i>Achillea ptarmica</i> , <i>Agrostis canina</i> , <i>Angelica sylvestris</i> , <i>Athyrium filix-femina</i> , <i>Caltha palustris</i> , <i>Carex acutiformis</i> , <i>Carex nigra</i> , <i>Carex paniculata</i> , <i>Carex riparia</i> , <i>Carex viridula subsp. oedocarpa</i> , <i>Cirsium palustre</i> , <i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i> , <i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii x praetermissa = D. x grandis</i> , <i>Dactylorhiza praetermissa</i> , <i>Dryopteris carthusiana</i> , <i>Eleocharis palustris</i> , <i>Epilobium palustre</i> , <i>Equisetum fluviatile</i> , <i>Equisetum palustre</i> , <i>Filipendula ulmaria</i> , <i>Galium palustre</i> , <i>Glyceria declinata</i> , <i>Glyceria notata</i> , <i>Hydrocotyle vulgaris</i> , <i>Hypericum tetrapterum</i> , <i>Jacobaea aquatica</i> , <i>Juncus acutiflorus</i> , <i>Juncus squarrosus</i> , <i>Lotus pedunculatus</i> , <i>Lysimachia vulgaris</i> , <i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i> , <i>Molinia caerulea</i> , <i>Persicaria hydropiper</i> , <i>Potentilla palustris</i> , <i>Pulicaria dysenterica</i> , <i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i> , <i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i> , <i>Ranunculus flammula</i> , <i>Ranunculus hederaceus</i> , <i>Silene flos-cuculi</i> , <i>Sparganium emersum</i> , <i>Stachys palustris</i> , <i>Stellaria alsine</i> , <i>Succisa pratensis</i> , <i>Thalictrum flavum</i> , <i>Valeriana officinalis</i> , <i>Veronica beccabunga</i> .
Open Water	<i>Bidens tripartita</i> , <i>Butomus umbellatus</i> , <i>Carex acutiformis</i> , <i>Carex paniculata</i> , <i>Carex riparia</i> , <i>Eleocharis palustris</i> , <i>Equisetum fluviatile</i> , <i>Galium palustre</i> , <i>Glyceria notata</i> , <i>Luronium natans</i> , <i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i> , <i>Potamogeton perfoliatus</i> , <i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i> , <i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i> , <i>Sagittaria sagittifolia</i> , <i>Schoenoplectus lacustris</i> .
Post-industrial (water-stressed)	<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i> , <i>Aira caryophyllea</i> , <i>Aira praecox</i> , <i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i> , <i>Asplenium adiantum-nigrum</i> , <i>Blackstonia perfoliata</i> , <i>Blechnum spicant</i> , <i>Centaurea scabiosa</i> , <i>Centaurium erythraea</i> , <i>Daucus carota subsp. carota</i> , <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> , <i>Erigeron acris</i> , <i>Filago vulgaris</i> , <i>Fragaria vesca</i> , <i>Jacobaea erucifolia</i> , <i>Linum catharticum</i> , <i>Ophrys apifera</i> , <i>Ornithopus perpusillus</i> , <i>Orobanche minor</i> , <i>Reseda lutea</i> , <i>Senecio viscosus</i> , <i>Silene vulgaris</i> , <i>Trifolium arvense</i> , <i>Trifolium medium</i> , <i>Trifolium micranthum</i> , <i>Trifolium striatum</i> , <i>Vicia tetrasperma</i> .
Cultivation	<i>Chenopodium polyspermum</i> , <i>Orobanche minor</i> , <i>Stachys arvensis</i> , <i>Thlaspi arvense</i> , <i>Vicia tetrasperma</i> .

Ecological Connectivity
Local Habitat Network
Sandwell Valley links directly with Core Landscape 06 Park Lime Pits, Cuckoo's Dingle & Great Barr Hall which is located to the north. There are additional links to the Priority Network Restoration Zones M6 Motorway Corridor and Tame Valley Canal to the north-west, and Birmingham Canal to the south.
National Habitat Network
Sandwell Valley links to the national habitat network in Birmingham to the north-east.

CL07 - Sandwell Valley - Components & Connectivity



Ecological Sub-area Opportunities

Focus Habitats		
Habitat	Action	Measure
Hedgerows	Improve management of existing	Habitat in good condition
	Reinstate historic/grubbed-out	New habitat
	Restore through gapping up	Habitat in good condition
	Establish hedgerow trees	Habitat structure improved
Ponds	Create new	New habitat at existing and new sites
Rivers	Restore hydromorphology (naturalise modified channels)	Improved ecological status
	Reduce artificial inputs	Improved chemical status
Eutrophic Standing Waters	Enhance marginal and emergent vegetation	Increased floral diversity and habitat structure improved
Lowland meadows	Enhance existing neutral grasslands	Increased floral diversity
	Create new species-rich neutral grasslands	Increased floral diversity and habitat structure improved
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Coppice	Habitat structure improved
	Create woodland edge	Habitat structure improved
	Diversify woody component	Habitat structure improved
	Diversify field-layer component of plantations	Increased floral diversity

Target Species	
Species/Species Group	Measure
Barn Owl	Confirmed recent records
Bats	Increased abundance of confirmed species
Breeding farmland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Breeding water & wetland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Breeding woodland birds (specialists)	Increased species and abundance
Brown Hare	Confirmed recent records
Brown Long-eared Bat	Confirmed recent records
Brown/Sea Trout	Confirmed recent records
European Otter	Increased signs, confirmed breeding population
European Water Vole	Confirmed recent records
Great Crested Newt	Increased abundance and number of breeding ponds
Hedgehog	Confirmed recent records
Woodland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Grassland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Heathland axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Mires axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance
Open Water axiophytes	Recent records and increased abundance

Geodiversity		
Site	Action	Measure
Sandwell Valley Country Park	Unknown	n/a

Connectivity Opportunities	
Local Habitat Network	
Connection	Action
Within Core Landscape CL07	Restoration of modified channel of the River Tame and tributaries.
	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation at sites including areas of public open space, golf courses, school grounds and sports fields.
	Plantation woodland enhancement.
	Creation of new ponds.
	Field boundary hedgerow recreation, restoration and creation.
	Planting of standard trees in parks, green spaces and school grounds.
Priority Network Restoration Zones (Tame Valley Canal and Birmingham Canal)	Increased marginal vegetation through the installation of coir rolls along hard banks.
	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation on undeveloped land including parks, green spaces, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Woodland enhancement and small-scale planting.
	Planting of standard trees (including fruit trees) along canal corridor.
Priority Network Restoration Zone (M6 Motorway Corridor)	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation on undeveloped land including parks, green spaces, school grounds and substantial road verges.
	Woodland enhancement and small-scale planting in adjacent areas of open space.
National Habitat Network	
Connection	Action
Birmingham section of Sandwell Valley (to south-east)	Restoration of modified channel of the River Tame and tributaries.
	Species-rich neutral grassland enhancement and creation at sites including areas of public open space, golf courses, school grounds and sports fields.
	Plantation woodland enhancement.
	Creation of new ponds.
	Field boundary hedgerow recreation, restoration and creation.
	Planting of standard trees in parks, green spaces and school grounds.

Information and Data Sources		
	Source	Date
Landuse	Ecological Evaluation of Birmingham and Black Country GIS data set, EcoRecord.	2021
Topography	OS Terrain 50 GIS data set, Ordnance Survey.	2017
Geology	British Geological Society 1:625,000 bedrock & superficial GIS web map services from BGS website: http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html	2021
	Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark sites names and location information https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/bcg/	2021
Soils	Soilscapes, Cranfield Soil & Agricultural Institute website: http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/	2021
Species and Habitats	EcoRecord species and habitat databases.	2021
Ecological Connectivity	EcoRecord, The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country (2021) <i>Draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map</i>	2021
	EcoRecord et al. (2021) <i>Midlands Heathland Heartland Lowland Heathland Nature Recovery Opportunity Mapping</i> .	2021
Historic Landscape Character Areas	Wolverhampton City Council (2010) <i>Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation</i> [data-set]. York: Archaeology Data Service [distributor] https://doi.org/10.5284/1000030	2010
Historic Environment Area Designations	Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study, Oxford Archaeology.	2019

[1] HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AREA DESIGNATIONS

The Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study has divided the Historic Environment Area Designations into four categories:

Archaeological Priority Areas (APA): sites with a high potential for archaeological remains of regional or national significance that have not been considered for designation as scheduled monuments, or where there is insufficient data available about the state or preservation of any remains to justify a designation. APAs are likely to have high archaeological and historic interest.

Areas of High Historic Townscape Value (AHHTV): areas where built heritage makes a significant contribution to local character and distinctiveness. The significance of AHHTVs is likely to be derived primarily from their architectural and historic interests. However, these areas may also have artistic and archaeological interests. Areas of High Historic Townscape Value are not limited to towns or cities, they also include villages, hamlets and areas of industry where the built heritage is considered to make a positive contribution to the historic environment of an area.

Designed Landscapes of High Historic Value (DLHHV): landscape areas that make an important contribution to local historic character but do not meet the criteria for inclusion on the national Register for Parks and Gardens. The significance of these areas is likely to arise from their historic, artistic and architectural interests, although such areas may also contain remains of archaeological interest.

Areas of High Historic Landscape Value (AHHLV): these recognise the quality of the wider landscape and their relative values. The significance of these areas arises from the natural and historic features contained within them (e.g. woodland, watercourses, hedgerows, and archaeological features). The significance of these areas is likely to be derived from their archaeological and historic interests.

[2] KEY HABITATS follows the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Broad & Priority Habitat definitions

This is a UK-habitat classification prepared by the UK Biodiversity Group that classifies all terrestrial and freshwater habitats in the UK into 37 broad habitat types. UK BAP Priority Habitats are a range of semi-natural habitat types that were identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action. The original Priority Habitat list was created between 1995 and 1999 and revised in 2007. The list of Priority Habitats has been used to help draw up statutory lists of habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The suite of habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity (formerly Priority Habitats) nest into the defined Broad Habitat Types.

[3] KEY SPECIES

Bird Indicators: Species listed under UK Biodiversity Indicator C5, Birds of the wider countryside and at sea (JNCC). The indicator shows changes in the breeding population sizes of common native birds of farmland and woodland and of freshwater and marine habitats in the UK.

Amphibians & Reptiles: All amphibian and reptile species native to the UK are included.

Mammals: Those protected by UK or EU law, included on the current list of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006 or amended), and those included on the latest B&BC LBAP list of Priority Habitats/Species.

Fish: Those protected by UK or EU law, included on the current list of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006 or amended), and those included on the latest B&BC LBAP list of Priority Habitats/Species.

Invertebrates: Pantheon Assemblage Types Analysis.

Flora (axiophytes): Those included on the Birmingham & the Black Country list of axiophytes (administered by EcoRecord) by four locally defined habitat types.

Cabinet – 18 October 2023

Willenhall Framework Plan: Phase 1 Developer Partner Procurement Outcome and Award

Portfolio: Councillor A. Andrew - Deputy Leader and Regeneration

Related portfolios:

Service: Regeneration, Housing and Economy

Wards: Willenhall South

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1. The Willenhall Framework Plan sets out a 10-year vision for Willenhall that aims to promote housing growth and healthy, prosperous communities. The Moat Street and Villiers Street scheme is Phase 1 of the Willenhall Framework Plan and aims to stimulate the regeneration of Willenhall by delivering much needed new homes whilst also promoting place making.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Willenhall has been identified by the council as an area for strategic intervention. The planned opening of the new railway station and promotion of the Walsall Growth Corridor as a priority for housing delivery and sustainable growth provides a real opportunity to promote Willenhall as a place where people aspire to live, work, and spend leisure time. The council has also been successful in securing external funding from the Government's Levelling Up Fund Round 2 (LUF2) and the Land and Property Investment Fund (LPIF) to help support intervention in Willenhall.
- 2.2 As reported to Cabinet at its meeting on 9 February 2022, a delivery options review was completed by Arcadis, acting as the council's Strategic Advisor, to ascertain the most suitable delivery option for the council to pursue in its aim to accelerate housing delivery in Willenhall. At the same meeting Cabinet agreed that the council should take on the role of master developer for Willenhall whereby it will take responsibility for facilitating delivery and guiding the development of each phase of the Willenhall Framework Plan. As a minimum the council would acquire land (for each phase) to create a development parcel and secure an outline planning approval for that phase. At that point, there are

several options for delivery, which could include de-risking the site further through advanced demolition and site remediation prior to disposal or procuring a developer partner. The role of the council can be reviewed for each proposed phase and, as agreed by Cabinet previously, the procurement of a developer partner is considered to be the most appropriate route to aid the delivery of the Phase 1 scheme.

- 2.3 At the meeting on 14 December 2022 Cabinet were informed of the different procurement option routes available and were recommended to approve the use of the Homes England Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) to procure a developer partner for Phase 1 of the Willenhall Framework Plan (Moat Street and Villiers Street). In addition to noting and approving the preferred developer partner procurement route, Cabinet also authorised officers to commence the procurement process noting that the appointment of the successful bidder would be the subject of a future Cabinet decision.

3. Recommendations

Following consideration of the confidential report in the private session of the agenda it is recommended:

- 3.1 That Cabinet approve the appointment of Keepmoat Homes Ltd as the Willenhall developer partner for the delivery of the Willenhall Framework Plan Phase 1 scheme (Moat Street and Villiers Street).
- 3.2 That Cabinet note the public sector funding secured to fund the Phase 1 scheme enabling works (demolition and remediation costs).
- 3.3 That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Resources in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration to finalise the Agreement for Lease, including agreeing a value for the enabling works within the agreed budget, with Keepmoat Homes Ltd and to subsequently authorise execution and exchange of the Agreement for Lease and entry into, or variation of, any additional documents (including the building lease and transfers) pursuant to that Agreement.
- 3.4 That Cabinet note that due to the procurement approach taken the council has the option to utilise the services of the preferred developer to deliver the remaining phases of the Willenhall Framework Plan which would be subject to future Cabinet decisions.

4. Report detail – know

Context

4.1 Background

Cabinet will be aware that a considerable amount of work has gone into preparing the Willenhall Framework Plan and subsequently the development of the Phase 1 scheme – Moat Street and Villiers Street. Cabinet has also recently

received detailed reports that have provided an update on the key workstreams and will be aware that:

- The outline planning application was due to be considered by the planning committee in September 2023. The planning committee at the meeting on 7 September 2023 resolved to delegate to the Head of Planning & Building Control to grant planning permission subject to conditions and a Section 111 Agreement to secure a Section 106 Agreement to include affordable housing provision and open space contribution and subject to:
 - The amendment and finalising of conditions;
 - Addressing concerns regarding flood risk/drainage, ground conditions, heritage, trees and Public Rights of Way; and;
 - Subject to no further objections from statutory consultees in response to the amended plans received.
- Cabinet on 19 July 2023 agreed for the council to use its compulsory purchase powers to acquire the necessary land parcels to deliver the Phase 1 scheme if they could not be acquired by agreement. Following Cabinet's approval, the council made the compulsory purchase order (CPO) on 29 August 2023, noting that efforts to acquire the necessary land parcels via negotiations will continue throughout the compulsory purchase process in respect of Phase 1.
- The council has been in the process of procuring a developer partner to deliver the Phase 1 scheme (noting that the council also has the option, in agreement with the developer partner, to use the services of the preferred developer to deliver future phases of the Willenhall Framework Plan). The outcome of the developer partner procurement process is the focus of this cabinet report.

4.2 Developer partner procurement

Cabinet will recall that the Homes England DPS includes an Expression of Interest stage followed by a two-stage tender process (stage 2A and 2B where more than six Expressions of Interest are received). On 25 February 2023 an Expression of Interest (EOI) was published to all DPS members. The EOI stage resulted in eight valid Expressions of Interest in becoming the council's developer partner for Willenhall. Given that the bidders have all been accepted by Homes England and been through initial due diligence, all eight bidders were invited to submit bids for the services.

- 4.3 The first stage (2A) of the DPS tendering process commenced in March 2023 and resulted in four compliant bids being received. A high-level review of the bids, on 100% quality criteria that included: delivery approach, capacity, environmental impact, carbon reduction, funding and minimising public subsidy, concluded that all four bidders should be invited to continue to stage 2B where more detailed bids would need to be submitted. The stage 2B process commenced in May 2023 with a deadline of 4 August 2023 for final bids. Unfortunately, one of the four bidders decided to withdraw from the process due to resource/capacity concerns. On 4 August the council received three compliant bids.

4.4 Evaluation process

The three bids received have been evaluated by an experienced evaluation panel consisting of council officers across a range of disciplines and external partners including the council's Strategic Advisor, Arcadis, and their sub consultants Avison Young. The council's external legal team from Bevan Brittan LLP was also part of the evaluation process.

Due to the council's aspiration to deliver transformational change in Willenhall, the bids received were evaluated using an 80% quality and 20% price split. The evaluation criteria for the quality element is provided in the table below.

Specification/ Award Criteria	Weighting (%)	Maximum Score
Delivery approach	10%	10
Development proposal and design quality	20%	10
Capacity and resources	10%	10
Innovation	4%	10
Social Value	5%	10
Environmental Impact and Carbon Reduction	10%	10
Sales & Marketing strategy	3%	10
Funding	5%	10
Structure for sharing the future commercial success or improvement	4%	10
Approach to minimising public subsidy	4%	10
Legal Criterion	5%	5

4.5 The evaluation process has identified Keepmoat Homes Ltd as the preferred developer. Further details about the evaluation process are provided in the accompanying private report.

Council Plan priorities

4.6 The Council Plan (2022 – 2025) focuses on five key areas that include:

- Economic – Enable greater local opportunities for all people, communities, and businesses; with a key outcome being-

Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place. The appointment of a developer partner will be an important step in delivering new homes in Willenhall.

- Communities – Empower our communities so that they feel they are connected and belong in Walsall, creating safe and healthy places whilst building a strong sense of community; with a key outcome being-

Our communities will be more resilient and supportive of each other. The Willenhall Framework Plan which sets out a vision for the area over a ten-year period aims to grow Willenhall into a vibrant, connected, and welcoming town with a strong sense of place which celebrates its diverse communities and promotes safe, healthy, and active lifestyles. The delivery of the Willenhall Framework Plan and therefore the Phase 1 scheme will ultimately benefit the local community.

Risk management

4.7 Risk: Delay in appointing a developer partner.

In line with the preferred delivery approach (i.e. master developer), the council needs to appoint a developer partner to deliver the proposed residential scheme to not only meet the aspirations set out in the Willenhall Framework Plan but also to meet funding obligations. In line with the council's programme, the preferred developer needs to be appointed by January 2024 to ensure that the proposed scheme can be delivered to meet funding timescales. A delay in appointing the preferred developer may impact on the council's ability to meet funding obligations and to deliver the scheme in a timely manner. The external funding secured by the council from both LUF2 and LPIF must be spent by 31 March 2025.

Mitigation: The procurement route to appoint a developer partner was agreed by Cabinet in December 2022 and three compliant bids from reputable companies have been received and evaluated with a preferred developer identified. Furthermore, the draft contractual agreement to appoint the developer partner has already been shared during the tendering process and each bidder was able to suggest amendments during the process. Subject to Cabinet approval, the council does not foresee any delays in appointing the preferred developer.

4.8 Risk: Programme slippage (land assembly).

A programme has been developed by the council for Phase 1 to ensure that all project dependencies are met to ensure successful delivery and the preferred developer has confirmed that it is able to meet key programme deadlines albeit with some dependencies such as land assembly and survey work. Should there be delays with land assembly (CPO), there is a risk that this could impact on the developer partner's ability to deliver the demolition and remediation elements of the overall scheme within the deadline set by external funders (LUF2 and LPIF).

Mitigation: The council anticipates that the developer partner will deliver the demolition and remediation elements of the scheme. The detailed programme is reviewed regularly by the project team and this will also extend to the developer partner once appointed. Should it transpire that the developer partner may not be able to complete the demolition and remediation works within funder timescales (i.e. 31 March 2025 for both the LUF2 and LPIF funds) the council may need to consider entering into a separate agreement to complete the demolition and remediation works on land in the council's ownership at that

time. In such a scenario, Cabinet will be updated, and the necessary approvals sought prior to any action being taken.

The council continues to make every effort to acquire the necessary land parcels via private treaty and has engaged property consultants Avison Young to assist with negotiations which commenced in March 2021. Furthermore, following a review earlier this year of progress to acquire the necessary land parcels via negotiations and in a timely manner, Cabinet authorised the use of the council's compulsory purchase powers and the council made the CPO on 29 August 2023. At the time of writing, the CPO objection period has commenced and this will conclude on 6 October 2023.

The council is in regular dialogue with the funding bodies and programme updates are provided as part of the monitoring arrangements.

4.9 Risk: Developer partner

It is intended that the council will fund the enabling works (demolition and remediation costs) associated with the Phase 1 development (see below as to how these will be funded). This will be on an open book basis and payment will be made against invoices to confirm expenditure at agreed payment dates. The appointed developer will fund the construction costs associated with the scheme. There is therefore a risk that should the appointed developer's financial standing deteriorate, then the council could be left with an uncompleted development.

Mitigation: The contractual agreement with the developer requires the developer to carry out the development in accordance with a pre-agreed programme subject to extensions of time for specified events. If the developer fails to meet a construction related deadline, then the council can serve notice on the developer who must provide a remediation plan specifying how construction will be accelerated to catch up with the breach. If the developer still fails to deliver then the council may serve notice to terminate the agreement (after allowing the developer's funder an opportunity to remedy the breach or find a suitable substitute to take on the developer's obligations). The council will also appoint a suitability qualified compliance inspector who will certify the works completed. Furthermore, a review of all the bidders funding strategies was completed as part of the evaluation process. This assessed the deliverability of the scheme by considering the funding surety and robustness.

4.10 Risk: Demolition and remediation costs exceed estimated budget.

Once appointed it will be the responsibility of the developer to commission and instruct the demolition and remediation works which are to be funded by the council. As part of the tender process all bidders were provided with a figure which was the median point of Arcadis' cost budget for this element of the overall scheme in order to ensure that the evaluation of the bids could be compared on a like for like basis. Furthermore, bidders were instructed to detail their proposed approach to minimising the level of public subsidy required (funding that will be made available from the council for the enabling works

(demolition and remediation costs)) and detail how this will be managed in a transparent and open manner. Responses were evaluated as part of the evaluation process. Whilst this element of the scheme would be on a strictly open book basis to quantify costs and ensures transparency to justify spend, there is a risk that costs could exceed available budget (noting that the site is currently in third party ownership).

Mitigation: A cost estimate for the demolition and remediation costs has been provided by Arcadis and this was used to submit funding bids to secure external resources to help fund overall scheme costs (LUF2 and LPIF). This information has been reviewed recently and the review has confirmed that there is sufficient budget to meet estimated costs. Although there is confidence that the demolition and remediation costs will not exceed the available budget, in the event that this risk materialises, changes may be made to the development proposals to improve viability, or the council may be required to provide additional resources to ensure delivery. An update on this risk, if required, will be provided at the relevant point in time.

4.11 Risk: Abortive costs

Following the appointment of the Willenhall developer partner, the parties will seek to enter into an Agreement for Lease to procure the design and construction of the development which is subject to conditions being satisfied (including a satisfactory planning permission) by the agreed date. The developer shall, at its own expense undertake site investigations, prepare, and submit the planning application (in the joint names of the council and the developer). If any of the conditions in relation to the development are not satisfied or waived by the condition's satisfaction date, then either the council or the developer may at any time thereafter terminate the Agreement. Should the Agreement be terminated prior to the condition satisfaction date due to the council's failure to satisfy the site assembly condition (for example because the CPO is not confirmed) the whole reasonable, evidenced and properly incurred costs (but excluding any development management fee) in connection with implementing the developer's obligations for the Phase 1 under the Agreement are payable by the council to the developer up to a maximum amount (to be determined).

Mitigation: Following termination, the developer must provide the council with a royalty free licence to use any documents, reports, investigations, and designs submitted as part of the planning pack which it is the beneficial owner of or must use reasonable endeavours to procure the same from any third-party owner. As the site information (planning pack, site investigation etc.) can be transferred to the council its costs in this respect will not be abortive, although may no longer be eligible for external funds secured. However, there are a number of costs that will not be recovered and would be classed as abortive as they relate to programme or work that will need to be re-produced in the event of termination and re-commencement of a developer procurement process/ site disposal etc. These costs include project management and cost management fees, legal fees and internal management time and a revenue budget may have to be identified in the future to fund these depending on the circumstances.

4.12 Risk: Property acquisition

The appointment of the preferred developer and grant of building lease will ensure that there is an exit route for the council that diminishes any related liabilities. There is a risk however that the council will acquire properties and the conditions under the Agreement for Lease are not satisfied.

Mitigation: In the event that the building lease does not complete a strategy will need to be agreed for the acquired properties.

Financial implications

- 4.13 The council will need to fund the enabling works (demolition and remediation costs) associated with the delivery of the Phase 1 scheme. The funding required from external sources (LUF2 and LPIF) and the council to fund such works has already been agreed by Cabinet; the financial forecast has not changed significantly since the last report, so therefore there are no additional financial implications arising from this report. Cabinet should however note the risks associated with the demolition and remediation costs and abortive costs as set out in the Risk section.

Legal implications

- 4.14 The council has appointed Bevan Brittan LLP as its external legal advisors for the Willenhall Framework Plan and associated workstreams. Cabinet was informed in December 2022 that Bevan Brittan LLP had recommended that as Homes England have developed standard legal documents for users of the DPS including the Agreement for Lease and building lease, then these should be adopted (noting that the documents can be adapted to produce project specific contracts as long as the changes are not material) to reduce any risk of challenge. Cabinet will recall that in line with the Homes England process, Bevan Brittan advised that the council and the developer partner enter into an Agreement for Lease followed by a building lease. The lease will be a long-term lease in excess of 100 years which allows for the freehold interest in completed units to be transferred to end purchasers. It should also be noted that the structure used by Homes England provides a secure process for achieving the council's aims and objectives whilst retaining control over the proposed development.
- 4.15 The project specific draft documents setting out the council's requirements were prepared in advance of the procurement process with drafts included within the pack of full tender documents issued to bidders. Those bidders invited to the second stage of the bidding process were invited to share their proposed changes to the documents which were then discussed during clarification meetings. All legal amendments have been assessed by Bevan Brittan as part of the evaluation process. The preferred developer has suggested amendments to the legal documents but these have not been assessed to be significant.
- 4.16 As set out in the report to Cabinet in December 2022 the documents to be entered into include:

4.17 Agreement for Lease

The Agreement for Lease will form a conditional contract between the council and the preferred developer. Once conditions are satisfied, the developer will draw down a building lease. The building lease will be the development agreement between the council and the developer.

4.18 The developer's main obligations under the Agreement for Lease will be to:

- Work collaboratively with the council to develop and progress a scheme through the planning process. Secure reserved matters approval for their scheme (or a new full planning application), the basis of which must be based on the development of the scheme tendered and which has been produced in collaboration with the council and agreed by the council, and to discharge all pre-start planning conditions.
- Secure all necessary funding required to deliver a viable scheme.
- Satisfy a development viability condition whereby the viability for the development is determined as "viable" by reference to a development appraisal prepared by the developer following the grant of the reserved matters application, the provision of any funding and as agreed with the council.

4.19 The council's obligations under the Agreement for Lease will be to:

- Work collaboratively with the developer to develop and progress a scheme through the planning process. (Note that in this case, use of 'the council' refers to its role as a landowner for the development and the developer will have to follow the statutory planning process).
- Deliver vacant possession of the site by an agreed longstop date.
- Confirm the extent of the Phase 1 site.

4.20 Both parties will need to work together to confirm whether the enabling works can be delivered within the costs allocated by the council to fund those works. Once the conditions have been satisfied the building lease will be completed.

4.21 Building lease

The developer's obligations under the building lease will involve building out of the planning consented scheme to include the minimum requirements.

4.22 Duties placed on the developer will include: -

- To coordinate effective management of the site and discharge all statutory health and safety duties.
- To arrange the delivery and management of all construction activities across the site in compliance with the terms of the planning approval.
- To raise the finance required to cover the scheme's peak funding requirement and arrange any credit lines that may be needed to meet cost overruns / cash flow shortfalls.
- To manage all marketing and sales of dwellings across the site.

- 4.23 Development risks such as cost overruns or poor sales will be the responsibility of the developer.
- 4.24 The developer will be obligated to start on site within a fixed period following draw down of the lease and once the development has commenced it must achieve the practical completion of all dwellings in accordance with the programme agreed. The building lease will also contain forfeiture and step in provisions which would allow the council to take back control of the development should the developer fail to meet their obligations for delivery under the lease.
- 4.25 On practical completion of the market homes, the council will transfer the freehold interest in each dwelling to the home buyer, through the agency of the developer who will agree the house sales in the open market and provide the council with a form of transfer, sales report, completion certificate and other specified information. Similarly, the freehold interest in the affordable homes will be transferred by the council to a registered provider procured by the developer. The council will need to instruct solicitors to act on its behalf in completing these plot sales which will have a resource implication. This additional resource has been estimated and can be accommodated within the overall budget for Willenhall.
- 4.26 Overage agreement
- If the developer delivers a more commercially successful scheme than was anticipated in the tender, it will share additional income over and above this threshold with the council in an agreed proportion.
- 4.27 Subject to Cabinet's approval to appoint the preferred developer, the final contractual documents will be agreed. In line with the current programme, the contractual arrangements should be agreed by January 2024 and the appropriate delegation to agree the final documents is sought within the Recommendation section of this report. Cabinet should note that there may be some further refinement to the documents but that this does not materially modify the essential aspects of the tender or the procurement and does not risk distorting competition or causing discrimination. Bevan Brittan LLP have confirmed that the structure of the legal suite is appropriate for a transaction of this nature and that the documentation reflects the outcome of the various meetings and discussions that have taken place in which the council and lead advisors have participated during the procurement process.
- 4.28 The council has broad powers under Part 2 Housing Act 1985 to promote or deliver housing of any tenure for the purposes of meeting housing need which permits the proposed development of housing set out in this report.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.29 The procurement of the developer partner has been supervised by Procurement Services and adheres to the council's Contract Rules and the

Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The Homes England DPS is a recognised DPS set up by the agency to help accelerate the development of much needed new homes.

- 4.30 Each bidder was asked to provide details of how they would maximise the social value created through the Phase 1 scheme. Each of the bids received was assessed against the council's Social Value Charter and Policy. As part of their bid, Keepmoat Homes Ltd have committed a number of social value commitments including to providing employment for 15 people within the local area and ensuring 50% of their supply chain spend is within 15 miles of Willenhall.

Property implications

- 4.31 The successful acquisition of Phase 1 interests will result in the council being liable for maintenance and management of additional land and property until such time that the Phase 1 delivery commences. Costs associated with holding costs and site security hoardings have already been agreed by Cabinet in February 2022 as part of the revenue costs for the scheme. The appointment of the preferred developer and grant of building lease will ensure that there is an exit route for the council that diminishes any related liabilities. There is a risk however that the council will acquire properties and the conditions under the Agreement for Lease are not satisfied. In this scenario a strategy will need to be agreed for the acquired properties.
- 4.32 At the time of writing, the council has not acquired any of the land interests required to deliver the Phase 1 scheme and whilst the council is continuing to negotiate with interested parties, it made the CPO on 29 August 2023.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.33 The Willenhall Framework Plan considers the wellbeing benefits of the proposed development and concludes that proposals will contribute to the social, economic, and environmental wellbeing of the area. The appointment of a developer partner will help facilitate the development of Willenhall as a place where individuals aspire to live, work, and spend leisure time. There is therefore a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.34 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been produced for the Willenhall Framework Plan and more recently a separate EqIA has been prepared in respect of the Phase 1 proposals and the CPO. The EqIA will continue be reviewed and updated as the Phase 1 proposals progress.
- 4.35 The Willenhall Framework Plan provides the support to drive forward the regeneration of the area. As well as setting out the council's aspiration to promote Willenhall as an area that is a sustainable place to live, work and spend leisure time it also contributes towards the council's vision as outlined in the Council Plan (2022-2025): Inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised. The delivery of new homes in particular will aim to diversify the type

and tenure of homes available in the area so that the needs of the community can be met.

Staffing implications

- 4.36 To date this key strategic project has required significant input from staff within Regeneration, Housing and Economy alongside support from other areas of the council as appropriate: Finance, Corporate Landlord, Procurement and Development Management. The appointment of a developer partner will require this work to continue. The transfer of homes to the end purchaser may also have staffing implications for Legal Services and this will need to be considered further as Phase 1 progresses.

Climate Impact

- 4.37 The Willenhall Framework Plan links to the Resilience and Adaptation theme of the council's Climate Change Action Plan and the aim to align climate action with regeneration, construction, and planning policy to enable economic prosperity and promotion of sustainability.

Consultation

- 4.38 As part of the development of the Willenhall Framework Plan, engagement with the local community and key stakeholders took place in order to better understand key issues that the Framework Plan needed to address; bringing derelict or redundant sites back into use was a high priority for respondents from the community.
- 4.39 A public engagement exercise was also completed prior to the submission of the outline planning application for Phase 1 to inform residents, businesses, and community groups about the proposals and to seek their views. Respondents were generally positive about the proposals, highlighting benefits associated with developing derelict sites and benefits associated with the provision of new housing. The outline planning application itself is subject to the statutory consultation process.
- 4.40 The preferred developer, in agreement with the council, will continue to engage stakeholders as the Phase 1 scheme progresses.

5. Decide

- 5.1 There are three options to consider: "do nothing", the council disposes of the Phase 1 site on the open market or choose to appoint a developer partner.
- 5.2 Do Nothing: The Walsall Site Allocation Document sets the planning framework for Willenhall and the borough. The council could therefore choose to do nothing (eg by not appointing a developer partner) and wait for landowners to bring sites forward for development or to the market. However, this will not assist with meeting the borough's housing targets or the wider regeneration of Willenhall as viability issues due to abnormal site costs, high land value expectations and fragmented ownership are known to hinder sites being brought forward. Cabinet

will also be aware that it recently agreed to use the council's compulsory purchase powers as a last resort to deliver the Phase 1 scheme and the council made the CPO on 29 August 2023. The appointment of a developer partner is an important step in demonstrating deliverability to support the case for the CPO.

- 5.3 Council disposes of the Phase 1 site on the open market: The council could assemble the site and as it has the funds to complete the enabling works (demolition and remediation costs), it could then dispose of a clean site on the open market. This option could result in the council achieving a land receipt for the site which it could then use to deliver future phases of the Willenhall Framework Plan. However, the council does not have the necessary expertise to deliver the enabling works and would still require an external team with the relevant experience to undertake such works. The disposal of the site on the open market would also mean that the council would lose any ability to influence the delivery and quality of the end scheme which is considered to be necessary to achieve the vision set out in the Willenhall Framework Plan. Furthermore, demonstrating deliverability of the proposed scheme is an important step in supporting the case for CPO.
- 5.4 Appointment of a developer partner: The appointment of a developer partner will enable the council to work in partnership with an experienced organisation who can assist the council in delivering a quality scheme that meets the aspirations set out in the Willenhall Framework Plan whilst enabling the council to benefit from the experience and risk sharing.

6. Respond

- 6.1 It is recommended that the council proceeds with appointing a developer partner.

7. Review

- 7.1 Subject to Cabinet approving the recommendations set out in this report the council will proceed to appointing the preferred developer as its developer partner for Phase 1 of the Willenhall Framework Plan. Officers will also continue to review the development and delivery of Phase 1 and update Cabinet at the appropriate time, requesting any further decisions as necessary.

Appendices

N/A

Background papers

- Willenhall Economic And Development Programme, Cabinet Report, 19 October 2015

- Willenhall Masterplan: Strategic Land Acquisitions, Cabinet Report, 10 February 2021
- Willenhall Framework Plan, Cabinet Report, 09 February 2022
- Willenhall Framework Plan: Phase 1 Developer Partner Procurement Approach and Funding Update, Cabinet Report, 14 December 2022
- Willenhall Framework Plan: Phase 1 Moat Street and Villiers Street project update and strategic land acquisition (use of the Council's Compulsory Purchase Powers), Cabinet Report, 19 July 2023

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David Brown
Executive Director

9 October 2023



Councillor Andrew
Portfolio holder

9 October 2023

Cabinet – 18 October 2023

Future provision of street lighting services

Portfolio: Councillor A. Andrew – Deputy Leader & Regeneration

Related portfolios: Councillor K. Murphy – Street Pride

Service: Street Lighting - Highways, Transport & Operations

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1. The council has a statutory obligation to maintain the highway in a safe condition. This includes the maintenance and management of highway lighting to provide a safe environment in which road users can navigate the road network efficiently and effectively.

2. Summary

- 2.1. The council maintain 30,098 lit highway assets, comprising street lights, lit signs, lit bollards and other ancillary lighting.
- 2.2. The street lighting service is provided through a contract with Walsall Public Lighting (WPL) Ltd under private finance initiative (PFI) arrangements. The 26 year PFI arrangement commenced on 28 March 2002 and expires on 30 April 2028.
- 2.3. WPL and their subcontractor Amey are fully responsible for the maintenance and operation of the borough's adopted highway lighting assets for the period of the contract and are required to manage them appropriately to deliver the lighting standards detailed in the contract. On expiry of the PFI, this responsibility will fall back to the council and therefore appropriate service delivery arrangements will need to be in place.
- 2.4. This report compares the future service delivery options and seeks resolution to proceed with the recommended procurement route.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That cabinet approve the commencement of preparations for a procurement exercise for a combined highway infrastructure services contract.
- 3.2. That cabinet delegate authority to the to the Executive Director for Economy, Environment and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, to enter into negotiations with Walsall Public Lighting with a view to extending the Public Lighting PFI contract by 11 months [Option 3].

4. Report detail - *know*

Context

Background

- 4.1. The council has a statutory duty to maintain around 528 miles of highway network across the borough, excluding the M6 motorway and the A5 trunk road. This network has a gross replacement value in excess of £1.5bn, including street lighting assets to the value of £50m, making it the most valuable asset owned, managed and maintained by the authority.
- 4.2. The council's highway infrastructure includes 30,098 lit highway assets, comprising street lights, lit signs, lit bollards and other ancillary lighting. Although the council has no obligation to light the adopted highway, there is a statutory obligation to maintain existing lit highway assets in a safe condition.
- 4.3. Over the next decade, the landscape of local authority highway services in the UK is poised for significant transformation. The foremost trend anticipated to shape the industry's approach to delivery is a growing emphasis on sustainability and technological advancement. In respect to street lighting, eco-friendly and smart lighting solutions will contribute to enhancing both safety and environmental goals.
- 4.4. With constrained budgets, councils will also need to create partnerships that can facilitate the delivery of high-quality services while remaining cost-effective. Collaboration with a commercial partner organisation can empower local authorities to optimise resources, reduce costs, accelerate timelines and benefit from a breadth of expertise, experience and creative solutions.

Current arrangements

- 4.5. The street lighting service is currently provided through a contract with Walsall Public Lighting (WPL) under private finance initiative (PFI) arrangements. The 26 year PFI arrangement was completed on 28 March 2002 and expires on 30 April 2028. The duration of the contract is based on the capital loan repayment period. The service is delivered on a day to day basis by Amey as a subcontractor to WPL.
- 4.6. Contract performance over the duration has been good. Over the past three years, 99.2% of emergencies, faults and repairs have been completed on time

and implementation of the LED lantern conversion is currently ahead of programme.

- 4.7. The operational relationship between the council and WPL has matured well over the duration of the PFI. A culture of mutual trust and cooperation has been developed and refined leading to efficiencies both within the council and the contractor. Partnership workshops have been used to develop the service, plan for the future and progress projects such as the LED lantern conversion which will deliver a 70% reduction in energy consumption.
- 4.8. Social value benefits have been delivered throughout the duration of the contract. Most recently these have included Amey's Journey to Work events that promote local job vacancies, provide careers advice and top tips on CV writing and interview techniques. In 2023, 127 people attended events in Walsall with 35 engaging in CV skills support and 29 receiving one to one interview preparation. Additionally, support has been provided to local community initiatives including in respect to Remembrance Day, the King's coronation and the provision of Christmas lights.

Market Position

- 4.9. Across the UK, there are just over 200 local authority street lighting services including 36 PFIs. Nationally, over a third of services are directly delivered by local authorities and around half are delivered via a form of partnership with a contractor who has a strong national presence and a turnover in excess of £100m.
- 4.10. Up to 32 lighting contracts are expected to expire between 2028 and 2030, of these, 12 are PFI contracts. Additionally, between 2023 and 2030, as many as 65 broader highway service contracts are expected to be coming to the market. The investment, both in terms of time and money, required to bid for contracts means that the best suppliers will be selective about the contracts they pursue.
- 4.11. Contractors will generally consider various factors when deciding whether to bid for an infrastructure services contract of this nature:
 - **Scope and requirements** including the specific services, tasks, and deliverables required. They consider whether their expertise, resources, and capabilities align with the project's needs.
 - **Contract duration** to evaluate their own capacity and the fit with business strategy.
 - **Financial viability** including budget, payment terms and whether the opportunity offers a reasonable return on investment.
 - **Geographical location** and how that fits with existing operational areas.
 - **Contract terms and conditions** to ensure that they are fair, manageable and provide opportunities to deliver effective partnerships, innovation and the strategic outcomes required by both parties.
 - **Market trends and future opportunities** will be evaluated to determine whether the contract could lead to additional work or open doors to new markets.

- **Client reputation** is also a key concern as contractors will consider their existing relationship with the client and the likelihood of a positive working relationship and successful collaboration.
- 4.12. Ultimately, the decision-making process will involve a thorough analysis of both the potential benefits and the risks associated with the opportunity. To secure a delivery partner who can offer sustainability, innovation and value for money, the council needs to create an opportunity that appeals to those providers.

Options Appraisal

- 4.13. In assessing the options available for future service delivery, the council engaged with neighbouring authorities. This provided a high-level understanding of existing street lighting service arrangements in the West Midlands and lessons learned from the recent work carried out by Staffordshire County Council in respect to their future service delivery model. A discussion item on the April 2023 agenda of the ADEPT Engineering Board, which includes representation from the ADEPT Street Lighting Group, also gave a broader insight into current plans and perspective with respect to term maintenance contract procurement.
- 4.14. Although market engagement will form part of the future procurement process, an insight into provider perspective was sought to inform the options appraisal. To date, discussions have taken place with Tarmac, the council's incumbent term maintenance contractor; Amey, the street lighting PFI sub contractor; and Colas, the National Highways Area 9 maintenance and response contractor. Tarmac do not generally directly deliver street lighting, Amey has a dedicated street lighting division and Colas' parent company Bouygues deliver lighting services in London, Kent and Cheshire. It is recognised that all three organisations are large national contractors however, their wider involvement in the industry and engagement with a breadth of smaller subcontractors offered helpful information about lessons learned, best practice and opportunities to consider.
- 4.15. In agreement with the portfolio holders, the following service priorities were identified for consideration as part of the options appraisal:
- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| ▪ Service resilience | ▪ Customer experience |
| ▪ Scale of economy | ▪ Community based approach |
| ▪ Commercial buying power | ▪ Complexity |
| ▪ Intelligent client capability | ▪ Affordability |
| ▪ Innovation | ▪ Authority readiness |
| ▪ Flexibility | ▪ Sector success |
- 4.16. The options that have been considered further are:
- Option 1: In house service delivery;
 - Option 2: A procured standalone service;
 - Option 3: A procured combined highway infrastructure service; and
 - Option 4: A shared service with other authorities.

- 4.17. The options appraisal is summarised at Appendix A and set out in greater detail at section 5.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.18. Well-maintained highway lighting advances the council's corporate plan priorities by contributing to safety, sustainability, and community well-being.
- Effective lighting provision enhances road visibility, reducing accidents and promoting safe travel for residents and visitors alike, aligning with the council's commitment to public safety.
 - An approach that embraces innovation and promotes energy-efficient lighting options. lower electricity consumption and align with the council's sustainability goals, reducing environmental impact, and cutting costs.
 - Intelligently lit streets create a sense of security and encourage positive night time activities, fostering vibrant and connected communities.

Risk management

- 4.19. An effective approach to managing the condition, inspection and maintenance of highway lighting affects the potential exposure of the council to insurance and compensation claims. If the council does not undertake its statutory maintenance functions, including those in respect to highway lighting, in a reasonable manner, then it can clearly be held accountable for third party loss, damage or injury as a result.
- 4.20. The majority of lit highway assets are managed under license by WPL along with the responsibility for maintenance, replacement and all the associated risks. They are responsible to inventory management and accrue new assets to the contract on completion of adoptable developer works.
- 4.21. At the end of the PFI, the assets and associated responsibilities and risks will be returned to the council. The council will therefore need to make appropriate provision for the management of highway lighting.
- 4.22. The PFI project agreement empowers the council to procure an independent survey of both physical apparatus and asset information to assess whether they have been managed in accordance with the contract. Additionally, the agreement sets out requirements in respect to the rectification and/or maintenance to be completed before handback to the council. These contract provisions will be used to ensure that the borough's lighting infrastructure is returned to the council in the anticipated condition and with the necessary information to support future asset management.

Financial implications

- 4.23. The annual spend on street lighting service delivery, excluding energy costs, is £3.673m. This includes PFI credits which are fixed at £1.595m for the life of the PFI and partially offset the service element of unitary payments. The balance, £2.077m is funded from the PFI reserve.
- 4.24. The earmarked PFI reserve is forecast to be fully utilised by the end of the current PFI term.
- 4.25. There is an electricity budget of £1.150m. Volatile contractual inflation remains a high financial risk.
- 4.26. The net controllable revenue budget for post PFI street lighting services, excluding electricity, is £2.281m. The interim arrangement will be met from the existing cash limit for the service.
- 4.27. External capital grants may be available for specific works but will be subject to strict conditions restricting their use and requiring the authority to demonstrate that they have not been used to replace existing budgets.

Legal implications

- 4.28. The legal implication of not maintaining street lighting is a complex and context-dependent issue. However, some general principles are:
- A highway authority may provide and maintain street lighting for any highway or proposed highway for which they are responsible.
 - A highway authority may alter or remove any works constructed by them or vested in them for street lighting purposes.
 - A highway authority shall pay compensation to any person who sustains damage by reason of the execution of works for street lighting.
 - A highway authority has a duty of care with respect to maintaining street lighting in a safe condition.
- 4.29. Clause 39 of the PFI project agreement sets out the legal obligations of all parties in respect to expiry. Whatever the future service delivery arrangements, the requirements of the PFI project agreement will need to be applied as the PFI draws to a conclusion.
- 4.30. The council will need to liaise with Amey and any new contractors in relation to the TUPE transfer of staff. In particular, if any element of the service provision was to be provided directly by the council, then there may be some staff who are entitled to have their contract of employment transferred to the council.
- 4.31. The council needs to consider The Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Procurement Bill when setting the strategy for any procurement activities.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.32. The recommended approach, namely a combined service procurement, would necessitate an arrangement to address the 11-month period between the expiry of the PFI and the start of the integrated contract. A number of potential procurement options have been considered in preparing this report:

Dedicated procurement exercise

- 4.33. An open tender procurement exercise could result in a new contractor delivering the service for the 11 month interim period. The need to mobilise a new delivery arrangement and potentially demobilise again 11 months later would be disproportionately disruptive given the value and duration of the contract. This could have a significantly detrimental impact on customer experience and the council's ability to deliver statutory obligations.
- 4.34. It is considered unlikely that this approach would deliver value for money. The estimated cost to bid for a contract of this nature is as much as £150,000. The cost of mobilising the contract and then demobilising at the end of the term is circa £300,000. It is anticipated that most, if not all, suppliers would build these costs into their prices for service delivery over the 11 month period, elevating the price to the authority.
- 4.35. It is also not expected that the bidder market would consider such an opportunity to be particularly attractive, particularly in the context of many more, higher value, longer term opportunities in, or approaching, procurement.

Commission the service via an existing framework contract

- 4.36. Amey, in their capacity as a street lighting contractor, are not currently on any of the frameworks used by the council. This may change between now and the expiry of the PFI and would provide a suitable procurement route. However, if this position remained unchanged, the introduction of a new contractor would create the same issues as a dedicated procurement exercise.

Conclude the HISC earlier than planned

- 4.37. The council could conclude the HISC with Tarmac after the first extension period in 2027 or, seek to negotiate a reduction in the second extension term to conclude the contract in line with the expiry of the PFI. However it is recognised that reduction in the second extension term is highly unlikely to be something that would be readily supported by Tarmac as it is not in their commercial interest.
- 4.38. The impact of inflation means that new infrastructure maintenance contracts are expected to be more costly than current arrangements. Discussions with industry colleagues have indicated that a significant proportion of highway authorities are extending contracts where they can in order to mitigate the impact of price increases.

- 4.39. Additionally, reducing the timescales for procurement would place additional pressure on the council's own subject matter experts and necessitate investment in additional professional services to support the process.

Vary the scope of the HISC to include street lighting services

- 4.40. The scope of the HISC could be changed by deed of variation to include street lighting. However this would be a substantial change to the contract and may be subject to challenge for the same reasons as a direct award. Moreover, the council would ultimately have to bear the cost of mobilising the service or, if the service were to be subcontracted to mitigate the mobilisation costs, an ongoing contractor's management fee.

Direct award to the current service sub-contractor

- 4.41. Under The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 a local authority can direct award a contract in exceptional circumstances. However, PFI project agreement is with WPL and not Amey, who undertake the day to day service delivery. A direct award to Amey does not fit well within any of the options which are set out in regulation 32(2) to (10) inclusive and could therefore be subject to a legal challenge.

Extend the PFI

- 4.42. Under regulation 72(1) (e) of The Public Contract Regulations 2015 Regulations, the council can extend the term of the PFI. This is something that representatives from Equitix (on behalf of WPL) and Amey have indicated that they would be open to exploring and would mitigate the risk of legal challenge.
- 4.43. As part of the extension, the authority could agree amendments to the contract terms or structure, provided that they don't change the overall nature of the contract or materially change its scope, or change the commercial balance of the contract in the contractor's favour.
- 4.44. The extension would be subject to a deed of variation. WPL are under no obligation to enter into any deeds of variation to the project agreement and therefore, to persuade them to do so, the council would be required to play their legal fees in respect to the process. Based on the current terms of the project agreement, it is highly likely that there would also be an ongoing management fee over and above the cost of service delivery. Although this will be subject to negotiation, it is likely to be considerably less than the combined cost of bidding, mobilisation and demobilisation that a new contractor would be expected to build into their prices.
- 4.45. Although it would be preferable to avoid the fees involved, this approach will negate the costs and service disruption associated with introducing a new provider for an 11-month period.
- 4.46. For the reasons set out above, extending the PFI is considered to be the most appropriate approach to procure the service arrangement to address the 11-

month period between the expiry of the PFI and the start of the integrated contract. However, early negotiations, well in advance of expiry and prior to the commencement of the combined services procurement exercise will present an opportunity to take a different approach if negotiations are unsuccessful.

- 4.47. The council have commissioned Bird & Bird, a law firm who advise both the public and private sectors on all aspects of procurement law, to draft a procurement strategy for the 2029 Highway Infrastructure Services Contract. Subject to cabinet approval, street lighting will be included in the scope of this strategy. The strategy will be presented to Cabinet for final approval in 2024 and will set out the procurement process and implications, including the approach in respect to social value.

Property implications

- 4.48. Amey is currently in the process of agreeing a lease to become co located with the wider Highways, Transport and Operations service at the council's environmental depot. To mitigate the risk of duplicated legal fees the lease will be drafted with a mutual break clause in 2028 in the event that the council do not negotiate a contract extension to the end of March 2029. delegated
- 4.49. The replacement highway and infrastructure services contract will include arrangements for leasing the highway depot at Apex Road for the duration of the contract. The terms of the lease will be subject to approval in accordance with the council's scheme of delegations and included in the information to bidders.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.50. A well-maintained highway network, including well-lit assets, significantly bolsters health and wellbeing. Adequate lighting enhances road safety, reducing accidents and anxiety-inducing driving conditions. Improved visibility lowers stress levels and fosters a sense of security, positively impacting mental health. Well-lit highways facilitate smoother traffic flow, curbing congestion-related air pollution and promoting cleaner air quality. Accessible and well-lit roadways enable faster emergency responses, potentially saving lives and minimising trauma. Additionally, illuminated highways encourage night time mobility, promoting active lifestyles and social engagement.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.51. A well-maintained highway network, including well managed highway lighting, plays a pivotal role in reducing inequalities by enhancing accessibility and connectivity. It supports equal opportunities for economic growth, social development, and improved quality of life. In remote or marginalized areas, a reliable highway network connects residents to essential services, education, healthcare, and employment opportunities in urban centres. This access enables people from all backgrounds to participate in the economy and access resources previously out of reach.

- 4.52. A functional highway network facilitates the efficient movement of goods and services, fostering trade and market integration for both rural and urban areas. This, in turn, promotes equitable economic development and reduces regional disparities. By levelling the playing field and enabling efficient interactions, a well-maintained highway system stands as a tangible catalyst for reducing inequalities and fostering a more balanced, inclusive society.

Staffing implications

- 4.53. On expiry of the PFI, responsibility for the maintenance and management of adopted highway lighting will fall back to the council. An additional lighting engineer over and above the current structure [one G12 service manager] may be required to absorb the workload being returned to the council. This will be reviewed and considered as part of a service wide structure review in readiness for the implementation of the future delivery model for the highway service from April 2029. Taking a holistic approach will ensure consistency across all service areas and ensure adherence to the council's organisation design principles.
- 4.54. TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations ensure that employees retain their rights and terms when a business or service transfers to a new employer. TUPE arrangements for the staff currently employed by Amey will be managed as part of the PFI demobilisation and subsequent mobilisation of future contracts

Climate Impact

- 4.55. The provision of highway lighting has a significant impact on the council's energy consumption. A project to convert 23,000 of Walsall's street lights to energy efficient LED technology is nearing completion and will dramatically reduce consumption.
- 4.56. By securing a long-term delivery partner who can drive innovation, the council will be best placed to implement further measures to mitigate the climate impact of the highway infrastructure they maintain.

Consultation

- 4.57. Post PFI options were initially appraised in March 2023 at a partnership day. A workshop led by an independent facilitator involved council officers, Equitix [the investors owning Walsall Public Lighting], Amey [the contractor] and a representative from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority [IPA]. The session saw all parties consider the options for post PFI service delivery and the associated opportunities and risks.
- 4.58. As set out above, following the partnership day, discussions with a small number of national contractors, local authorities and peers on the ADEPT Engineering Board were used to better understand the market position and best practice. This provided helpful context and the benefit of lessons learned.

- 4.59. In May 2023 the cabinet members for regeneration and street pride were consulted in respect to priorities, outcomes and the options being considered by the council.
- 4.60. A consultant working on behalf of the IPA has also supported with this reporting process and acted as “a critical friend”.
- 4.61. The principles of the proposed approach have been discussed with Bird & Bird who, as noted above, have been appointed to draft the procurement strategy for the replacement Highways Infrastructure Services Contract.
- 4.62. The preferred option was reviewed and supported by the council’s Third Party Spend Board on 18 July 2023.

5. Decide

Option 1: Create an in-house provision by in-sourcing the street lighting service

- 5.1. The council could bring street lighting service provision into the authority aligning with the other operational services already delivered by highways, transport and operations from the environmental depot in Brownhills.
- 5.2. Advantages:
- Establish direct control of the street lighting function.
 - Ability to re-define what is contracted out and revisit the scope and specification of those aspects of the service to ensure customer focus and explore a community based approach.
 - The council has established infrastructure and processes that could be used to facilitate routine elements of the service.
- 5.3. Disadvantages:
- Service disruption whilst establishing an entirely new way of working.
 - Up to 16 staff would need to be transferred into the council on their existing terms and conditions and with associated pension liabilities.
 - Duplication of functions such as administration, contract management, health and safety and fleet would likely necessitate some redundancies.
 - The size and specialist nature of the service may result in limited capacity to respond in a timely and cost effective manner to peaks and troughs in service demand.
 - The size of the service means that the council is unlikely to be able to deliver maximum benefit in respect to commercial buying power and innovation. This in turn may impact on affordability.
 - Streetlighting service delivery is more complex than the environmental services currently delivered by the council.

Option 2: Procure a standalone street lighting service

5.4. The council could procure a standalone street lighting service taking a similar operational format to the existing provision but without the capital funding from central government and private sector investment.

5.5. Advantages:

- Opens up the tendering to smaller contractors who may not have the capacity or resources to participate in lengthy, costly bidding processes.
- Opportunity to incorporate flexibility into the contract to accommodate for changing budgetary arrangements and regional procurement initiatives.
- Staff transfer would be from one contractor to another rather than into the council.
- Longer contract terms would provide certainty and an ability to develop mutual relationships ultimately improving quality and efficiency.
- Opportunity to embed social value and community benefit in the procurement process ensuring that our local residents benefit from the arrangement.

5.6. Disadvantages:

- The procurement process requirements could become cumbersome relative to the size of the service.
- There is a danger that ensuring a seamless, integrated highways service is made more labour intensive by having multiple delivery partners, necessitating additional client resource to administer the service.
- Less opportunity to benefit from economies of scale and efficiencies derived by integrating functions and the workforce.
- Opportunities for innovation will be reliant on the successful contractor having the capability and capacity to promote and implement them.

Option 3 [Recommended Option]: Procure a combined highway services contract comprising the scope of the current highway infrastructure services contract and street lighting

5.7. In December 2018, Cabinet approved the contract award for the provision of Highway and Infrastructure Services to Tarmac Trading Limited. The contract started on 1 April 2019 for a period of six years initially, with option to extend for a further two periods of two years. At that time the indicative contract value was up to £15m per year and has averaged between £11m and £12m per annum to date. If the council were to apply the full contract extension period, the Highway and Infrastructure Service Contract [HISC] would conclude in March 2029.

5.8. The council could choose to include street lighting in the scope of the contract which replaces the HISC in April 2029. To ensure service continuity, this approach would necessitate an interim arrangement to bridge the 11-month period between the expiry of the PFI and the commencement of the combined highway services contract. As the incumbent street lighting contractor, Amey have confirmed that they would open to negotiating a short-term arrangement

mitigating the costs and disruption associated multiple changes in provider over a short period of time.

5.9. Advantages:

- The inclusion of street lighting would increase the value and scope of the combined service contract, creating a more appealing opportunity to the market.
- Potential for economies of scale, joint efficiencies such as combined service delivery teams and sharing of resources and equipment.
- Greater ability to incorporate flexibility into the contract to accommodate for changing budgetary arrangements and regional procurement initiatives.
- Potential to attract larger providers who bring opportunities for innovation, efficiency and reach back to a greater breadth of knowledge, experience and best practice.
- Potential to attract providers with multiple highway services contracts and greater commercial buying power due to their market position.
- Ability to utilise and build on the existing client knowledge and experience developed by operating large, combined service term maintenance contracts for over 10 years and build on process improvements already delivered.
- Longer contract terms would provide certainty and an ability to develop mutual relationships ultimately improving quality and efficiency.
- Opportunity to embed social value and community benefit in the procurement process ensuring that our local residents benefit from the arrangement.

5.10. Disadvantages:

- A lengthy, costly and demanding procurement process.
- Some smaller contractors may be precluded from tendering by incorporation of large scale and technically complex works such as resurfacing and structures maintenance.
- An interim arrangement (circa 11 months) would also have to be put in place.

5.11. The approach taken to procuring the interim arrangement is set out at paragraph **Error! Reference source not found.** to 4.47 of this report.

5.12. All three of the contractors consulted confirmed that a combined services contract is something that they would be very interested in pursuing as a future opportunity.

Option 4: Establish a shared street lighting service with neighbouring authorities

5.13. The council currently delivers the maintenance and management of traffic signals through a shared service with Wolverhampton City Council. Subject to neighbouring authorities being amenable to such an arrangement being

established, a similar approach could be taken for the delivery of street lighting services.

5.14. Advantages:

- Shared services can lead to economies of scale, as resources are pooled and duplicated efforts are reduced.
- A larger service may benefit from increased commercial buying power and efficiencies through streamlined and consistent operations.
- Shared services can allow for the consolidation of specialized skills and expertise.
- By pooling resources, participating local authorities may be better able to afford to invest in innovation that they might not have been able to implement individually.
- Longer contract terms would provide certainty and an ability to develop mutual relationships ultimately improving quality and efficiency.
- Opportunity to embed social value and community benefit in the procurement process ensuring that our local residents benefit from the arrangement.

5.15. Disadvantages:

- Even as the lead authority, there may be some loss of control due to the requirement to accommodate the service needs of all partners.
- Different local authority cultures, ways of working and political leadership may make establishing shared goal challenging.
- Implementing shared services can be complex and time consuming and the council structure, in its current form does, not provide capacity for implementation.
- While the primary goal of shared services is to achieve cost savings and efficiency, there could be unintended consequences, such as reduced responsiveness to local needs, increased bureaucracy, or reduced innovation.

6. Respond

6.1. The draft procurement strategy for the combined services contract will be presented to cabinet for approval in 2024.

6.2. Subject to approval, the Executive Director for Economy, Environment & Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, will enter into in principle negotiations with WPL Lid in respect to an 11 month extension to the PFI.

6.3. If negotiations are successful, a report regarding the contract extension, will be provided to Cabinet.

7. Review

- 7.1. Progress will be monitored against the key milestones and high-level project plan appended to this report. Highlight reports are provided to the portfolio holders and Walsall Network Board on a quarterly basis.
- 7.2. The council have accepted an offer from the IPA to do a PFI expiry “health check” in early 2024.
- 7.3. Details of plans for the expiry of the Street Lighting PFI and the procurement strategy for the combined highway services contract will be presented to Cabinet in spring 2024.

8. Appendices

- 8.1. Options Appraisal Summary
- 8.2. Scope of Services
- 8.3. PFI expiry high level plan

9. Background papers

None

10. Author

Kathryn Moreton
Interim Director – Place & Environment
✉ Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk
☎ 658031

Signed



Kathryn Moreton
Interim Director

6 October 2023

Signed



Councillor Andrew [Deputy Leader]
Portfolio holder - Regeneration

6 October 2023

Appendix A – Options Appraisal Summary

Required Outcomes:	Value + Quality + Customer Experience												
Contributing Factors:	Resilience	Scale of economy	Commercial buying power	Intelligent Client Capability	Innovation	Flexibility	Customer Experience	Community based approach	Complexity	Affordability	Authority readiness	Sector success stories	Total weight adjusted score
Weighting:	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	75	75	NA
In house service	33	66	33	66	33	66	100	100	33	33	66	33	63.7
Procured stand alone service	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	33	73.4
Combined highway infrastructure service	100	100	100	66	100	100	66	66	66	66	66	66	92.9
Shared service with other authorities	100	100	66	66	100	66	33	33	33	33	66	33	70.4

Scoring: 0 = Critical issue/ barrier to implementation; 33 = Poorer than current performance; 66 = Unknown/ Parity of performance [at best]; 100 = Improved performance.

Appendix B – Scope of Service

A brief description of the scope of service is outlined below:

Activity	Current responsibility	Post PFI responsibility
Inspections and testing - routine visual inspections, cyclic testing for electrical safety, and structural assessments to ensure that the lighting assets are in good condition and pose no safety risks.	Walsall Public Lighting	Term street lighting contractor on behalf of Walsall Council
Reactive repair work – repair and maintenance of lit highway infrastructure in response to routine inspections, testing and fault reports.	Walsall Public Lighting	Term street lighting contractor on behalf of Walsall Council
Planned maintenance – routine repair and maintenance of all lit assets including planned maintenance activities such as cleaning and painting.	Walsall Public Lighting	Term street lighting contractor on behalf of Walsall Council
Emergency response – Provision of a 24 hour emergency call out service. Duties are varied and include attending road traffic collisions, providing assistance to the police and fire services and responding to safety critical faults and damage.	Walsall Public Lighting	Term street lighting contractor on behalf of Walsall Council
Major and minor highway lighting installations – capital and developer funded works including asset installations and replacement programmes of varying sizes.	Individually commissioned, delivered by Amey	Term street lighting contractor on behalf of Walsall Council
Management of customer enquiries – response to routine customer enquiries and fault reports	Walsall Public Lighting	Walsall Council
CMS provision and inventory management – management and maintenance of a central management system and detailed asset inventory for all lit highway infrastructure	Walsall Public Lighting	Term street lighting contractor on behalf of Walsall Council
Attachment installation – installation of attachments on street lighting assets including advertising banners and festive lighting	Individually commissioned, delivered by Amey	Term street lighting contractor on behalf of Walsall Council
Lighting design – provision of design capacity for highway lighting projects	Individually commissioned, delivered by Amey	Walsall Council supplemented by the term street lighting contractor

Scheme development support – supporting the client team with scheme development activities including cost estimation and works programming.	Individually commissioned, delivered by Amey	Term street lighting contractor on behalf of WMBC
Contestable electrical connections – installation of electrical connections.	Individually commissioned, delivered by Amey	Term street lighting contractor on behalf of WMBC

Street Lighting PFI Expiry Plan



Walsall Council



Project Summary

Background

The Walsall Council street lighting service is provided through contract with Walsall Public Lighting Ltd and delivered on a day to day basis by Amey under private finance initiative (PFI) arrangements. The 26 year PFI arrangement was completed on 28 March 2002 and expires on 30 April 2028. WPL Ltd and its contractor Amey are fully responsible for the maintenance and operation of the street lighting assets for the period of the contract and have to manage them appropriately to deliver the lighting standards detailed in the contract.

There are currently no service delivery arrangements in place for the period beyond 30 April 2028.

Objectives

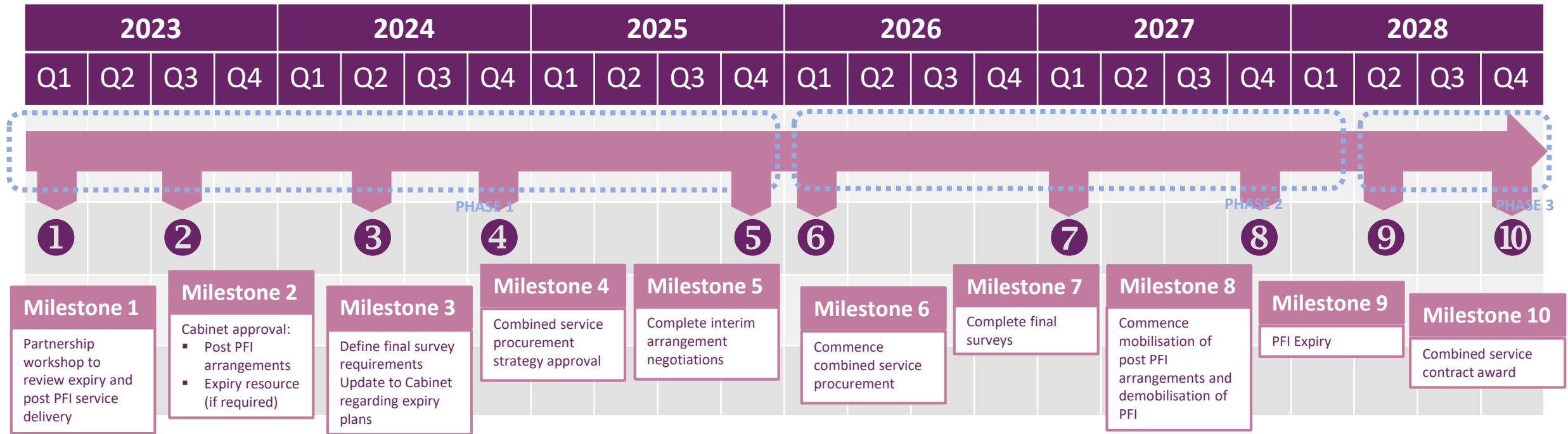
Ensure WPL Ltd meets it's contractual obligations for the contract exit and transition so that full value for money is obtained for the residual period of the contract until expiry.

Ensure that the expiry and transition process fully supports the council's plans for service delivery following the contract expiry so that the required services continue to be delivered.

Scope

- Electrical testing and associated works
- Structural testing and associated works
- Annual condition inspection
- Twice yearly scouting [signs and bollards]
- Cleaning signs, bollards and luminaires
- Emergency response - 2hr & 24 hr
- RTC support
- Routine repairs and maintenance
- CMS provision
- Design
- Capital programme delivery
- Asset replacement including RTC asset replacement
- Installation of attachments on street lighting assets.
- Installation of electrical connections
- Third Party Works

Milestones



	Theme	Timescale	Deliverables
Phase 1	Expiry planning and decision making	Jan 2023 – Dec 2026	Agree processes and contract interpretations Develop and implement plans and strategies Ensure full integration with future procurement plans
Phase 2	Delivery	Jan 2026 – Mar 2028	Deliver final asset survey, final remediation and handback Review and transfer data, TUPE and systems Run future service procurement Conduct transition planning and mobilisation
Phase 3	Transition and closure	Apr 2028 – April 2029	Complete all handback certification Finalise accounts and close out residual PFI contract issues Bid in new service

Summary Plan – PFI Expiry [Phase 1]

	Theme	Timescale	Deliverables
Phase 1	Expiry planning and decision making	Jan 2023 – Dec 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree processes and contract interpretations Develop and implement plans and strategies Ensure full integration with future procurement plans

		2023				2024				2025				2026				2027				2028				2029										
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4							
PHASE 1	EXPIRY PLANNING	[Dashed box spanning Q1-Q4 2023]																																		
	Partnership workshop	★ Milestone 1																																		
	Develop high level expiry plan	[Bar]																																		
	Ensure integration with procurement plans					[Bar]																														
	Agree project agreement interpretations					[Bar]																														
	Update Cabinet regarding expiry plans					★ Milestone 3																														
	POST PFI SERVICE DELIVERY	[Dashed box spanning Q1-Q4 2023]																																		
	Define service scope	[Bar]																																		
	Industry engagement	[Bar]																																		
	Options appraisal			[Bar]																																
	Cabinet decision re: future service			★ Milestone 2																																
	Draft combined service procurement strategy					[Bar]																														
	Combined service procurement strategy approval									★ Milestone 4																										
	Interim arrangement planning and negotiation					[Bar]																														
Complete interim contract negotiations													★ Milestone 5																							

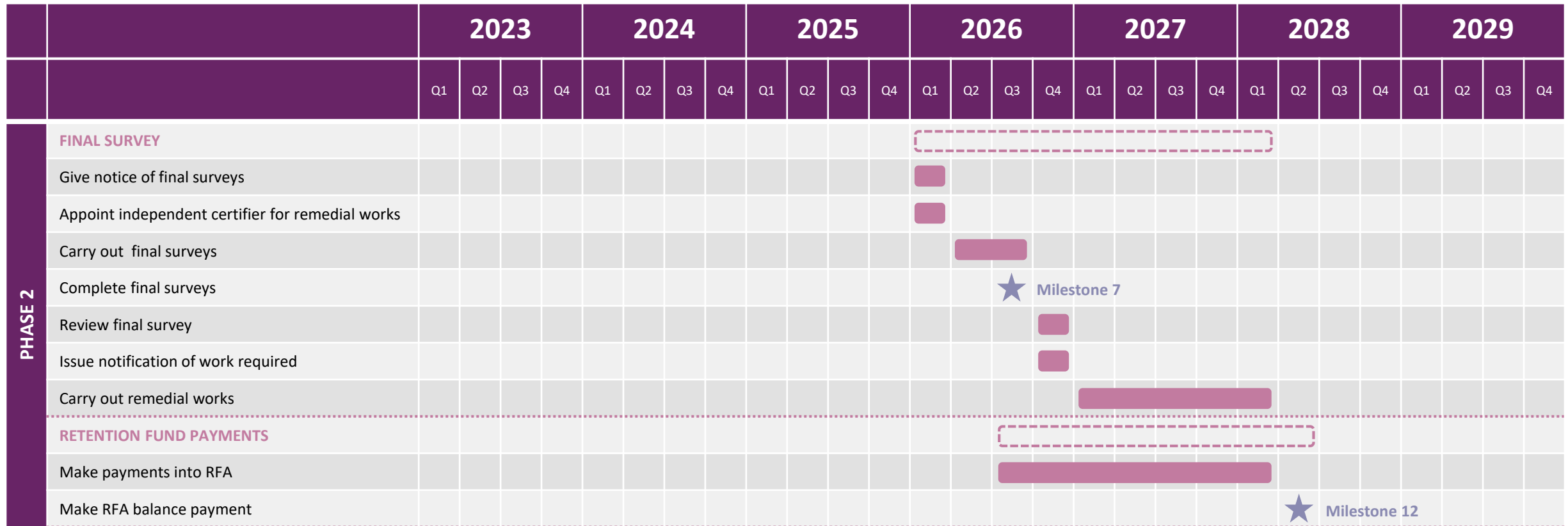
Summary Plan – PFI Expiry [Phase 1 cont.]

	Theme	Timescale	Deliverables
Phase 1	Expiry planning and decision making	Jan 2023 – Dec 2026	Agree processes and contract interpretations Develop and implement plans and strategies Ensure full integration with future procurement plans

		2023				2024				2025				2026				2027				2028				2029					
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
PHASE 1	FINAL SURVEYS																														
	Agree approach to final surveys																														
	Finalise and agree scope of final surveys																														
	Confirm contractor approval for final surveys																														
	Procure final surveys																														
	RETENTION FUND PAYMENTS																														
Set-up retention fund account [RFA]																															

Summary Plan – PFI Expiry [Phase 2 cont.]

	Theme	Timescale	Deliverables
Phase 2	Delivery	Jan 2026 – Mar 2028	Deliver final asset survey, final remediation and handback Review and transfer data, TUPE and systems Run future service procurement Conduct transition planning and mobilisation



Risk Management

Last Review:

April 2023

Next Review:

October 2023

Ref	Description	Owner	Mitigating Actions	Residual Risk
				Low Med High
1	Expiry is not given sufficient priority within wider business plans, resulting in delayed decision-making, poor resourcing of activity and wasted value.	WMBC	Cabinet decision on key aspects of expiry to be confirmed in July 2023 including appropriate resourcing.	Low
2	Failure to enforce obligations for maintenance leads to double payment – first through the unitary charge payment and again through rectification costs after PFI contract expiry.	WMBC	Current contract performance is good Ongoing performance monitoring is in place	Low
3	Inadequate understanding of asset condition endangers future services provision, with safety risk having been transferred to the authority.	WMBC	Structural testing regime in place and ongoing and results are available at any time for examination. CMS live to provide visibility of service performance	Low
4	Failure to anticipate timely re-provision of services leads to costly interim solutions and/or service disruption.	WMBC	Cabinet decision on interim arrangements to be confirmed in July 2023 Early discussions with existing service provider ongoing at a senior level.	Med
5	A significant level of activity at the tail end of the contract results in the failure to address issues fully, with liability falling back to the authority.	WMBC	Early planning for post-PFI arrangements Handback survey planning underway.	Med
6	There is a lack of people, skills and experience to manage expiry.	All	Appropriate WMBC resource to be identified for approval in July 2023. Existing Amey staff have significant experience in overseeing the end of contracts. Equitix?	Med
7	There is an adversarial relationships between the PFI parties and a lack of effective contract management from both sides.	WMBC/ Amey	Existing relationships are good however there is a risk that discussions relating to 5yr post PFI residual life may provide points of contention. Early discussions will take place regarding assets that appear not to be in A1 condition with a view to determining if remedial action can be undertaken to satisfy the residual life requirements and will be documented and agreed.	Med
8	There is a lack of detail or practicality within the contract around the conditions and processes for expiry and handback.	All	Relevant contract clauses have been reviewed Agreed understanding to be formally documented [ACTION KM/ NS]	Med

Risk Management

Last Review:

April 2023

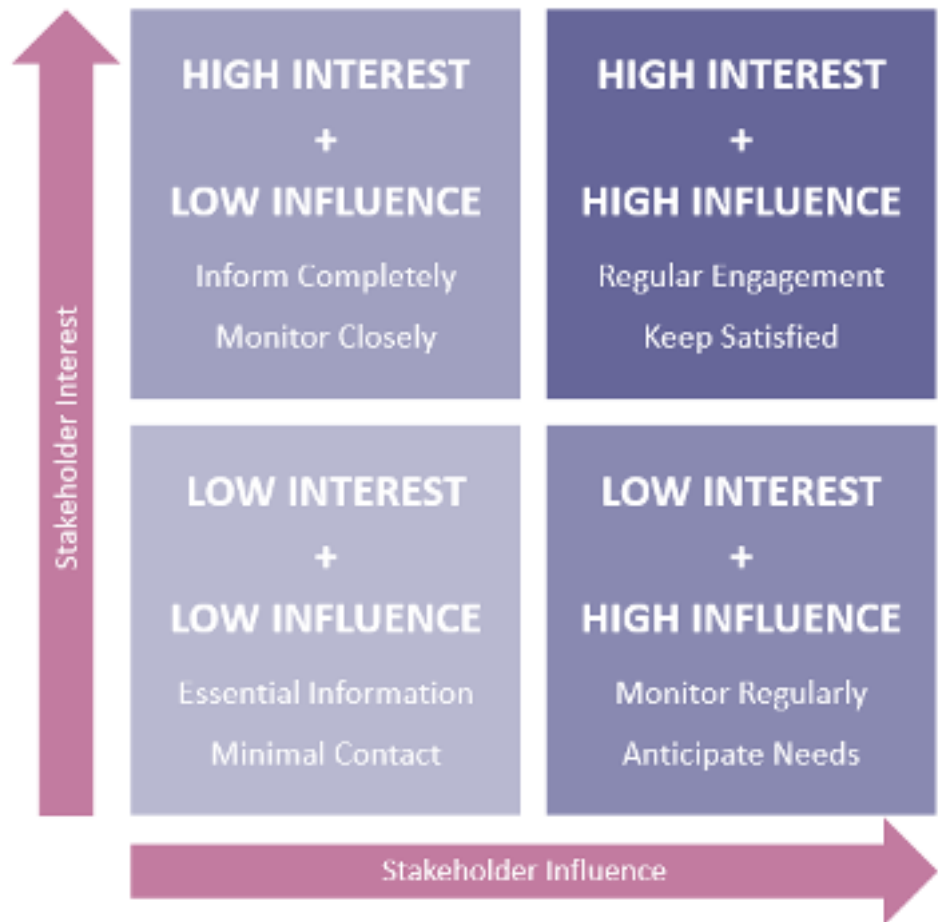
Next Review:

October 2023

Ref	Description	Owner	Mitigating Actions	Residual Risk Low Med High
9	Short term political focus results in a lack of focus on long term planning beyond 2028.	WMBC	Street lighting policy to be reviewed and costed for implementation post-PFI. Capital and Revenue bids to be submitted inclusion in the council's Medium Term Financial Plan – January 2024 Alignment with planning in respect to other high value highways contract procurement	High
10	Follow-on services are not in place by the expiry dates resulting in a failure to provide continuity of services.	WMBC	Interim arrangement to be defined in 2023 with negotiations ongoing thereafter to ensure timely mobilisation. Default completion of PFI would result in automatic TUPE transfer of PFI contract staff to WMBC.	High
11	At the point of expiry, the authority lacks the skills and experience to manage the post expiry service delivery arrangements	WMBC	Plan to be prepared and implemented once post-PFI arrangements are confirmed [July 2023]. Established contract/ service management structure already in place with considerable experience in delivering place based services both directly and via contractual arrangements.	High
12	Direct award of the contract for interim service delivery is subject to a legal challenge by another provider and impacts service delivery during the period immediately after the PFI expires.	WMBC	A documented review of all alternative procurement routes Early market engagement to ensure full transparency and the opportunity for challenge Timely market engagement [2 years before expiry] to ensure time to respond appropriately to any challenge arising.	High
13	Direct award of the contract for interim service delivery fails to deliver best value for the council due to a lack of competition.	WMBC	Market analysis to determine fair pricing benchmarks Monitored performance metrics and deliverable to maintain accountability	High

Stakeholder Management

Stakeholder Management



	Interest	Influence	Method of Engagement
Walsall Council	High	High	Existing contract management meetings Specific issue meetings Annual partnership workshops Walsall Council Cabinet meetings
Amey	High	High	Existing contract management meetings Specific issue meetings Annual partnership workshops
Equitix	High	High	Existing contract management meetings Specific issue meetings Annual partnership workshops
Lenders	Low	Low	Written correspondence as required
IPA	High	Low	Update meetings at key milestones
Housing Associations	High	Low	Written correspondence as required
Members of the public	Low	Low	WMBC website

Resource Management

Critical Success Factors

The project will need to be sufficiently resourced, with the required capabilities. The appraisal will need to be carried out in a timely basis and to a sufficient level of detail to inform decisions. Future service provision will need to meet the council's statutory obligations as LHA and the anticipated level of customer demand.

Resource requirements

	Expiry planning and strategy	Procurement of post PFI service delivery	Final surveys	Retention fund payments	Service implementation
Time	1 year + quarterly reviews	3 years	1 year	3 months	6 months
Expertise	Project Management Legal Procurement Contract management Technical - PFI specific knowledge, street lighting service delivery Market engagement and analysis	Project Management Legal Procurement Contract management Service subject matter experts – highways and street lighting Bidding and evaluation Market engagement and analysis	Project Management Legal Procurement Technical - PFI specific knowledge, street lighting service delivery	Financial planning Investment management Accountancy	Project management Contract management Service subject matter experts – highways and street lighting Corporate Landlord Fleet Services
Budget	£10,000	TBC – Combined Service Procurement Strategy	£300,000	NA	TBC – Combined Service Procurement Strategy

Cabinet – 18 October 2023

Walsall Council Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2023/24

Portfolio: Councillor G. Perry – Deputy Leader and Resilient Communities

Related portfolios:

Service: Community Safety and Enforcement

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 The aim of food law is to protect the public from preventable food and water borne disease, contamination and undeclared allergens. It also aims to ensure the integrity of food quality, labelling and compositional standards and to protect consumers from food fraud, food substitution and adulteration.
- 1.2 The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan (the plan) attached as **Appendix A** describes how the authority will enforce statutory controls regarding food safety and monitor food, premises and personnel in a structured manner. The plan will also be used as the basis for any inspection or audit by the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

2. Summary

- 2.1 The Covid-19 pandemic restricted the delivery of official food controls creating an increase in the number of unrated businesses and rated businesses whose inspections were overdue. Consequently, the FSA introduced a national recovery plan in July 2021 directing local authorities to re-start their intervention programmes using a phased approach. The recovery plan formed the basis of the 2022/23 service plan. The FSA ended its recovery plan in March 2023. In order for services to re-align with the Food Law Code of Practice and to catch up the FSA now expects local authorities will carry out due interventions for establishments that are back in the routine programme of interventions in accordance with the frequencies set out in the Code. (This is reflected in the 2023/24 service plan.)
- 2.2 Through the work of its environmental health and trading standards services, Walsall Council ensures that its statutory responsibilities in the respect of regulating the food industry are fulfilled.
- 2.3 Through the work of the director of public health, issues around health and wellbeing are at the centre of policy development. The link between the health of residents and the local economy is seen as a key issue in Walsall and is enshrined

in the joint strategic needs assessment, health and wellbeing strategy and Council Plan. The aims and objectives of the plan, contribute significantly to both the health and economy agendas.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That That Cabinet receive the plan for the year 2023/24 as evidence of the Council's compliance with its statutory duties in relation to food law and recommend it to Full Council for approval and adoption.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 The provision of safe food and water, the prevention of outbreaks of food and water borne disease and the investigation of allegations of food fraud are fundamental principles of protecting public health and the economy. Environmental health and trading standards officers work directly with businesses, residents and partner agencies and are constantly striving to provide a balance between the economic success of the business against the need to always protect the health of customers and staff.
- 4.2 The plan sets out the council's commitment to the implementation of food safety enforcement for the year ahead.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.3 The strategic priorities and the ways in which environmental health and trading standards contribute to them are detailed below.

- 4.4 **Economic growth for all people, communities and businesses** - the work of the service supports economic growth in a number of ways:

- New and existing businesses are given advice and support to not only survive but thrive despite difficult economic conditions.
- Consumers are given confidence when shopping in Walsall.
- Introducing competition into regulatory standards through the national food hygiene rating scheme, empowering residents to choose which business should receive their custom and motivating businesses to improve their standards so they gain new and retain existing customers.
- The service promotes those businesses which sign up to and achieve the Health Switch Awards and encourages residents to visit and enjoy their healthier food.
- We take robust enforcement action against those businesses or individuals who seek to gain an unfair advantage over competitors by not complying with regulations thereby putting their staff and customers at risk.

- 4.5 **People have increased independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities:**

- The service ensures that unsafe practices and foodstuffs are identified and robustly tackled. This ensures that the health of the public is protected thereby preventing ill health that places a negative burden on the economy and people's lives.
- The skills and opportunities available within the service are used to promote and implement key aspects of the Health and Well Being Strategy for example through Healthy Workplace Awards, Making Every Contact Count, the Health Switch Award and tobacco control/smoking cessation projects.
- The service strives to prevent outbreaks of communicable disease and where such disease outbreaks take place use the statutory powers available to control and stop their spread as well as bringing to justice those who may be responsible.

4.6 Children have the best start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and are learning well

- The work the service undertakes has a bearing on the health of children as it does all other members of the community. Premises that deal exclusively with children such as schools and nurseries are at present given a higher risk rating score because of the vulnerability or age of the children.
- Trading standards will respond quickly and effectively to national, regional or local food alerts around compositional standards for infant formula and similar foods necessary for or targeted at children.
- Trading standards conduct age restricted sales investigations around alcohol, cigarettes and knives in order to ensure young people are not at risk from unscrupulous traders.

4.7 Communities are prospering and resilient with all housing needs met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion

- Food businesses are often at the centre of their community and their success and regulatory compliance can have a beneficial impact on communities. Likewise poorly run premises with overflowing bins, noisy equipment, late opening and badly prepared food can have a detrimental impact on the image or self-esteem of communities.
- Issues such as child sexual exploitation, modern day slavery, illegal immigration and other organised criminal activities can be associated with food businesses, staff therefore work closely with internal services and external agencies where they believe issues such as this exist.
- Regulatory activity is prioritised based on risk and where serious non-compliance is found robust enforcement action is taken against those businesses having the most detrimental impact on communities.

4.8 Without a plan that sets out a commitment to food safety and standards and a strategic review of the delivery of that service the authority could be challenged by the FSA. Any audit or formal investigation by the Food Standards Agency would be more difficult for the authority to defend without such a plan.

4.9 The plan highlights the good work carried out by the service to ensure food safety is maintained and to protect residents from harm. There have and continue to be pressures from other areas of work such as reactive pressures from infectious disease, emergency prohibitions and other serious incidents. These pressures have led to a number of predominantly low risk food premises not receiving their

programmed inspection. Whilst this is not ideal, it is a consequence of prioritisation of workload based on resource and ensuring wherever possible serious incidents and high-risk premises receive most attention.

- 4.10 The need for the service to continue to place a major emphasis on allergen control as a consequence of several high-profile deaths (outside of Walsall) means that a significant amount of Officer time is being dedicated to this area of work so that it is properly considered and regulatory controls implemented as effectively as possible having regard to current guidance and best practice. This is increasing the time taken to complete inspections but is a key issue for the service to prioritise at present.

Financial implications

- 4.11 There is a revenue budget of £372,337 in place that supports the funding of this council service, and the plan will be delivered within this budget. Details as to the costs associated with the service can be found at section 4 of the plan.

Legal implications

- 4.12 By virtue of section 12 of the Food Standards Act 1999 the FSA has the function of monitoring the performance of enforcement authorities in enforcing relevant legislation. This function includes, in particular, setting standards of performance (whether for enforcement authorities generally or for particular authorities) in relation to the enforcement of any relevant legislation. The Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities is the mechanism by which the FSA puts into effect the powers contained in the Food Standards Act 1999. It provides for the following:

- published local service plans to increase transparency of local enforcement services;
- clear agreed standards for local authority feed and food law enforcement;
- local authority monitoring data used to select authorities for audit where there are concerns about enforcement performance; and
- an audit scheme aimed at securing improvements and sharing good practice.

- 4.13 Any plan produced by the authority should comply with the framework agreement.

- 4.14 The FSA's audits of local authority food and feed law enforcement are conducted against the requirements of the framework agreement and, more specifically, a document called the Standard.

- 4.15 The Standard sets out the minimum levels of performance expected in relation to the full range of a local authority's feed and food law enforcement activity, including food hygiene, food standards, imported food and feeding stuffs law enforcement.

- 4.16 The Standard draws together the obligations placed on local authority food and feed law enforcement services arising from legislation and related guidance, and codes of practice. This includes local authority performance in relation to inspections, sampling, complaints, formal enforcement, promotion and advice to business.

- 4.17 The work of the division pertinent to this report is undertaken pursuant to the provisions of the Food Safety Act 1990 and associated codes of practice, the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013 and any other such regulations which were developed from the European Communities Act 1972
- 4.18 The Food Safety Act 1990 states that every food authority shall enforce and execute within their area the provisions of this Act with respect to which the duty is not imposed expressly or by necessary implication on some other authority.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.19 The council is part of a national agreement/service level agreement with Public Health England for the analysis of any microbiological food samples taken. There is no cost for this service. The authority has to appoint a public analyst for food and an agricultural or deputy agricultural analyst for animal feed and fertilisers. Depending upon the nature of any samples taken and the type of analysis required the service will use on an ad hoc basis those companies or other local authorities outlined in Section 2.2

Property implications

- 4.20 There are no property implications arising from this report.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.21 The council has a statutory duty to promote health and wellbeing. Through the work of the director of public health, issues around health and wellbeing are at the centre of policy development. The link between the health of residents and the local economy is a key issue in Walsall and is enshrined in the joint strategic needs assessment, health and Wellbeing Strategy and council plan. The aims and objectives of the plan, contribute significantly to both the health and economy agendas.
- 4.22 The services contribution to the corporate priorities also sets out how it contributes to the Marmot principles.

Staffing implications

- 4.23 There are no direct impacts upon staffing arising from the report.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.24 The implications for reducing inequalities have been taken into account and assessed as set out below.
- 4.25 The regulation of the food industry affects all members of society. With the resources available the service will always prioritise those matters that more directly affect vulnerable persons. The service will assist where it can with

translated material, interpreters or by coaching those who require it in the production or sale of safe food.

- 4.26 Implementation of the plan will have no adverse equality implications as the same levels of advice and support are provided to all food business proprietors from all sections of the community.
- 4.27 Certain sectors of the food trade are predominantly owned by one or other ethnic groups. In order to ensure a consistent and proportionate approach all decisions are based solely on consideration of risk, public safety, evidence, and public interest. All enforcement policies reflect this approach.

Climate Change

- 4.28 The report may have some indirect climate change and environmental implications in so far as it affects the working and commercial environment in Walsall.

Consultation

- 4.29. This plan has never been traditionally consulted upon with the communities of Walsall. It is a document setting out the council's commitment based upon statutory guidelines and responsibilities and therefore not subject to influence or change based upon formal consultation responses.

5. Decide

- 5.1 Cabinet is being asked to receive this service plan for the year 2023/24 as evidence of the council's compliance with its statutory duties in relation to food law and recommend it to full Council for approval and adoption.
- 5.2 The plan is required by statutory guidance. Should the Council decide not to adopt the plan and fail to meet its statutory obligations the FSA can invoke powers conferred under Section 42 of the Food Safety Act 1990 to discharge a local authority's duties where they are satisfied that duty is not being met.
- 5.2 The plan reflects a balance between the requirements of central government through the Code and the local situation in Walsall. Resources are no longer such that the authority can guarantee a fully compliant inspection regime. The plan indicates that the service will use risk, intelligence and the local knowledge and experience of inspectors to ensure high risk activities are dealt with as a priority.

6. Respond

- 6.1 Although the plan is brought to cabinet and council for approval it is a living document. Therefore, from the 1st April 2023 all works relating to food safety have continued and this generates the programme for 2023/24 and so on. If agreed, then the plan will reinforce the direction of travel and the priorities for the service or if there are different suggestions forthcoming allow the service to consider and implement and recommendations given.

7. Review

- 7.1 Monitoring and review of the plan is built into the document and includes regular team meetings, 121's, APC's, portfolio briefings, statutory annual returns to government and a fortnightly refresh of the food hygiene rating scheme. The annual review brought before cabinet and council fulfils a significant part of the review process.

Background papers

None

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Kathryn Moreton
Interim Director

6 October 2023



Councillor Perry
Portfolio holder

6 October 2023



Walsall Council

Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2023-24

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1.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE FOOD SERVICE

1.1 Aims of the Food Service

- To protect the public health from preventable food and water borne disease.
- To protect public health from contaminated food and undeclared allergens, ensure the integrity of food quality, labelling and compositional standards and to protect consumers from food fraud, food substitution and adulteration.
- To carry out the Food Standard Agency (FSA) Animal Feed Delivery Programme
- To promote and implement key aspects of the Public Health agenda
- To comply with the FSA Framework Agreement and relevant codes of practice.
- To have regard to the Regulation Policy when considering enforcement action
- To support those we regulate comply and grow.

1.2 Objectives of the Food Service

- To carry out a programme of interventions at food premises allocating resources to those premises posing the most significant risk.
- To assist new or existing businesses through frontline advice or Home or Primary Authority schemes to achieve compliance.
- To publish food hygiene ratings so consumers can make informed choices and businesses are encouraged to invest in raising standards and become profitable.
- Use intelligence to ensure that food particularly imported food offered or exposed for sale is fit for human consumption and to expedite the removal of hazardous products from the food chain.
- To investigate cases of food poisoning and tackle practices and processes identified as sources of infection.
- To investigate complaints relating to food and food premises and take appropriate, timely and where necessary robust enforcement action.
- To undertake a microbiological sampling programme proactively at manufacturing premises and where necessary in connection with outbreaks of disease or service requests.
- To undertake a sampling programme to ensure that food complies with legal standards relating to presentation, labelling and advertising, compositional standards and the absence of non-permitted or excessive levels of additives, contaminants and residues.
- To undertake an animal feed delivery programme in line with FSA requirements.

1.3 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

The Council has a Council Plan for 2022/25, which sets out the Council's ambitions until 2025. It sets out outcomes and explains how progress towards their achievement will be measured. The Plan is aligned to the Council's four-year Budget Plan and has the following key areas of focus:

Economic - Enable greater local opportunities for all people, communities and businesses

People - Encourage our residents to lead more active, fulfilling and independent lives to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing

Internal focus - Council services are customer focused effective, efficient and equitable

Children - Have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well

Communities - Empower our communities so that they feel they are connected and belong in Walsall, creating safe and healthy places whilst building a strong sense of community

The plan can be viewed via the following link:

<https://go.walsall.gov.uk/corporate-plan>

The Strategic Priorities and the ways in which Environmental Health and Trading Standards contribute to them are:

Economic - Enable greater local opportunities for all people, communities and businesses

- Our work supports new and existing businesses to not only survive but thrive despite difficult economic conditions.
- Our work gives consumers confidence when shopping in Walsall
- Our work continues to introduce competition into regulatory standards through the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, empowering residents to choose which business should receive their custom
- We confront those businesses or individuals who seek to gain an unfair advantage over competitors by not complying with regulations thereby putting their staff and customers at risk.

People - Encourage our residents to lead more active, fulfilling and independent lives to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing

- Ensuring that unsafe practices and foodstuffs are identified and robustly tackled to ensure the health of the public is protected therefore preventing ill health that places a negative burden on the economy and the lives of people.
- To use the skills and opportunities available to the service to promote and implement key aspects of the Health and Well Being Strategy for example through Healthy Workplace Awards, Making Every Contact Count and tobacco control/smoking cessation projects.

- To prevent outbreaks of communicable disease and where such disease outbreaks take place using the statutory powers available to control and stop their spread as well as bringing to justice those who may be responsible.

Internal Focus – Council services are customer focused effective, efficient and equitable

We will work with internal partners to give advice and expertise in relation to those matters that fall within our area of expertise. This could be as being a member of the Safety Advisory Group, Health Protection Forum, Training Forum, Directorate Health and Safety Committee, Exploitation Delivery Group, Transformation Groups and Walsall Proud Programme etc.

Children - Have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well

- The work we undertake has a bearing on the health of children, premises that deal exclusively with children such as schools and nurseries are at present given a higher risk rating score because of the vulnerability or age of the children. Complaints and infectious disease incidents involving children would also receive a higher degree of response or scrutiny on the basis of a potential higher impact on their lives.

Communities - Empower our communities so that they feel they are connected and belong in Walsall, creating safe and healthy places whilst building a strong sense of community

- Food businesses are often at the centre of each community and their success and regulatory compliance can have a beneficial impact on communities. Likewise poorly run premises with overflowing bins, noisy equipment, late opening and badly prepared food can have a detrimental impact on the image or self-esteem of communities. Our services will therefore focus regulatory activity against those businesses having such a detrimental impact on communities.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Profile of Walsall MBC

Walsall is a unitary authority in the West Midlands region. The Census 2021 reported that its population size has increased by 5.5%, from around 269,300 in 2011 to 284,100 in 2021. Whilst the Borough is predominantly urban, it does have significant areas of open space mainly in the east. Along with Sandwell, Dudley and Wolverhampton, Walsall forms part of the Black Country sub region, which was, designated a Local Enterprise Partnership in 2010.

Walsall lies at the heart of the national road and rail networks with the M6, M6 toll, M5 and M54 all running through or close to the Borough. Rail and bus routes feed into national networks meaning 5 million people are within 45 minutes of Walsall by public transport. (*Walsall Borough Local Economic Assessment, V1 July 2011*)

Walsall town centre is the strategic and economic centre of the borough, but there are also five key district centres: Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall. All of these have distinct histories and identities and are important retail hubs serving their local communities.

Four out of five businesses surveyed serve clients locally in Walsall and around two in three serve the Black Country or West Midlands. Over 60% of businesses have customers in the rest of the UK and over 30% have customers overseas. Only a third of sales are outside the region meaning Walsall Companies are very reliant on the local economy. Over half of working residents are employed in the borough and it is estimated around 4.7% of the Boroughs residents are employed in the food and accommodation sectors. Walsall has a variety of manufacturing and service industries and is an operational base for a number of food wholesalers. There are also several companies producing a variety of food products which are distributed throughout the UK. (*Walsall Borough Local Economic Assessment, V1 July 2011*)

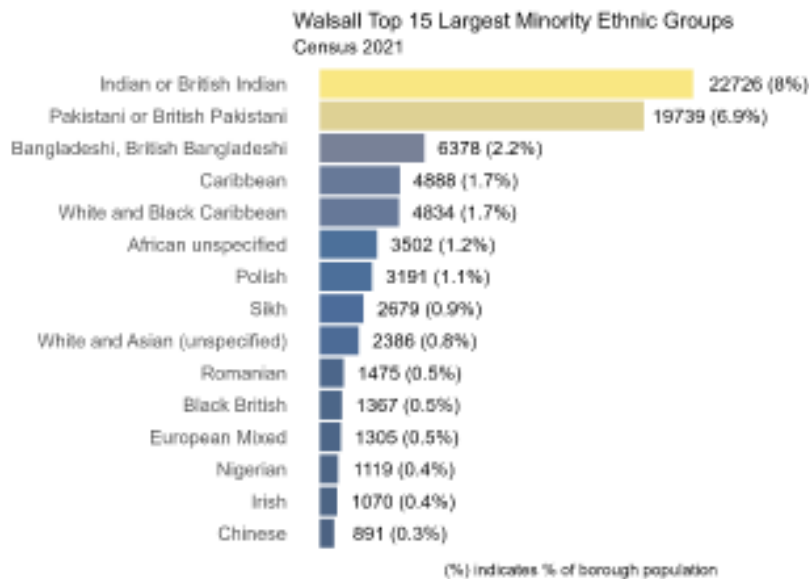
The 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks Walsall as the 25th most deprived English local authority (out of 317), placing Walsall within the most deprived 10% of districts in the country. The labour market profile for claimants in Walsall (May 2023) show that 5.7% of the working population claim out of work benefits compared to 4.9% in the West Midlands and 3.7% in Great Britain.

[\(https://www.walsallintelligence.org.uk/home/demographics/deprivation/ \)](https://www.walsallintelligence.org.uk/home/demographics/deprivation/)

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157191/report.aspx#tabidbr>

Walsall is a culturally diverse town where people of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi background form the largest minority ethnic groups. White British comprise the largest ethnic group at approximately 67.4% of the borough population, and more broadly the wider White ethnic category at 71.4%. Minority ethnic groups have seen substantial increases,

now accounting for 32.6% (1 in 3) of Walsall's population, compared to 23.1% (1 in 4) a decade prior in 2011. The chart below visualises this in greater detail.



Minority ethnic groups are highly concentrated in certain parts of the borough, predominantly in Southern and Central Walsall (wards including Pleck, Palfrey St. Matthews, Paddock and southern Birchills Leamore).

[\(https://www.walsallintelligence.org.uk/home/demographics/diversity/\)](https://www.walsallintelligence.org.uk/home/demographics/diversity/)

In the past decade, there has been a rapid change in the eating habits of the UK population with there being a considerable growth in the consumption of food from outside of the home. (*Rand Europe – Food Consumption in the UK 2020*) Studies have found that takeaway food outlets are often located in areas of higher socio-economic deprivation and that there is a strong association between deprivation and the density of fast food outlets, with more deprived areas having more fast food outlets per 100,000 population. (*Public Health England - Using the planning system to promote healthy weight environments, 2020*) There is also evidence that adults with lower income tend to consume more takeaway meals eaten at home, compared to those with higher income and that there is an evident health inequality (*Rand Europe – Food Consumption in the UK 2020*)

The food service plays an important role in bridging the link between health and economy by protecting and improving the health of residents whilst also having regard to the economic prosperity of the business sector.

2.2 Organisational Structure

The Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities provides the Food Standards Agency with a mechanism for implementing its powers under

the Food Standards Act to influence and oversee local authority enforcement activity. The Food Safety Act 1990 states that every food authority shall enforce and execute within their area the provisions of this Act with respect to which the duty is not imposed expressly or by necessary implication on some other authority.

Walsall Council's constitution, Part 2, Article 4.01 (a)(ii) lists the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan as a plan or strategy that must be approved by full Council before it can become operational. This Plan will therefore be submitted on an annual basis to Cabinet with a recommendation that it is sent to full Council for approval and adoption

The Director of Resilient Communities may authorise members of staff to act on behalf of the Council and to enforce and administer relevant legislation. They are also authorised to appoint or recommend for appointment:

- Lead Officers for Food (Safety and Standards)
- The Chief and Deputy Chief Inspector of Weights and Measures
- An Inspector to institute legal proceedings in respect of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Public Analyst for the purpose of Section 27 of the Food Safety Act 1990

The Head of Community Safety and Enforcement is responsible for:

1. Managing Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing with respect to enforcing relevant legislative requirements.
2. Acting as a Lead Officer for the Food Safety Act and its codes of practice.
3. To authorise enforcement action including, the institution of legal proceedings, serving of legal notices and the issuing, suspension and revocation of licences and permits.
4. To ensure the service operates and performs in line with its various statutory responsibilities and that evidence of performance is submitted to Central Government for oversight in a timely fashion upon request.

The Team Leader Environmental Health and Team Leader Trading Standards are responsible for delivery of their respective services in line with current corporate, regional and national priorities.

Presently there are 11 permanent Environmental Health posts, of which 10 require a qualification to undertake food safety duties of which 5.7 FTE's work predominantly on Food Safety, 2.02 FTE's work on Health and Safety related matters the remaining 2.3 FTE's work on animal licensing, nuisance, licensing and other regulatory activity. Additionally, 1 FTE Food Safety Support Officer undertakes food safety duties and is subject to a temporary

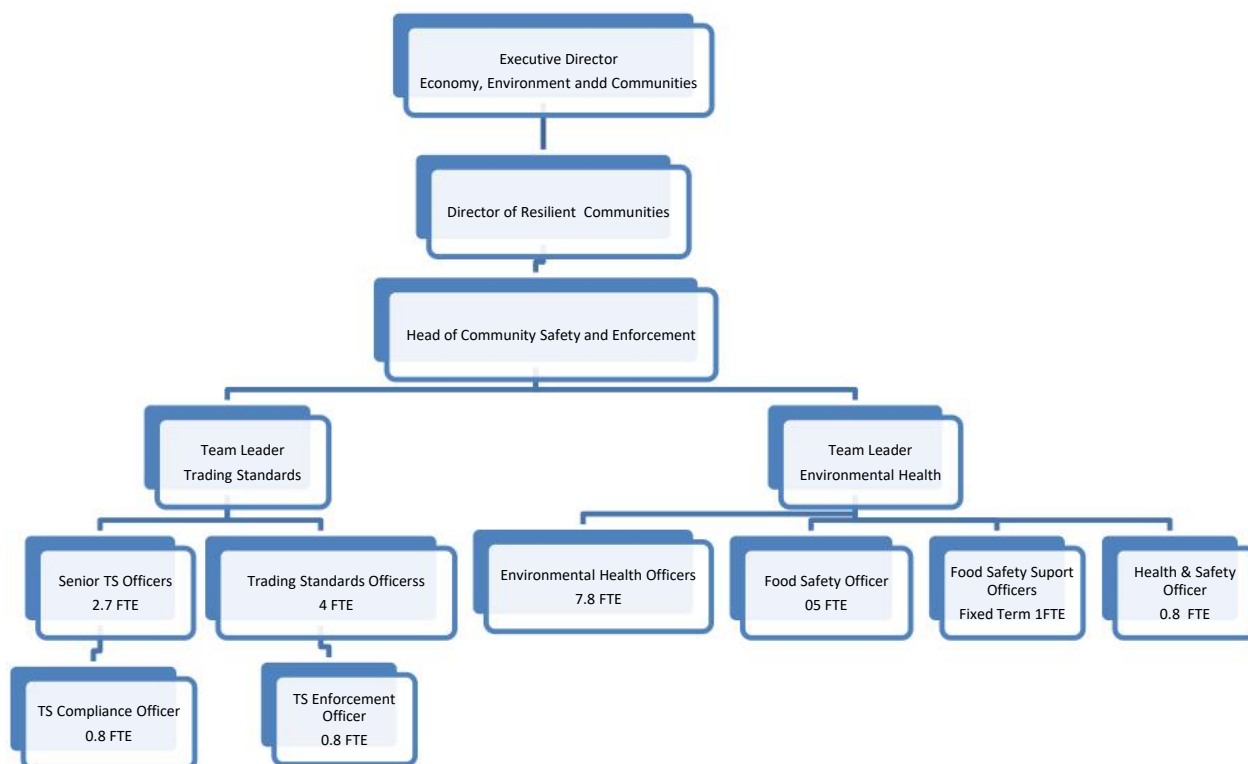
fixed term contract which will expire during the course of 2023/24 and which can only be extended if funding is secured to support the post.

There are presently 4.7 FTE trading standards officers qualified to undertake food standards duties alongside their other trading standards work of which approximately 1 FTE officer time is spent enforcing food standards.

Environmental Health use the UK Health Security Agency Food, Water and Environmental Microbiology Laboratory, London for any samples taken.

Trading Standards use Public Analyst Scientific Services (PASS) based in Wolverhampton for compositional analysis of food samples

2.2 Structure of Service and Contact Details



Delivery of the Food Service	
Service Delivery Point	Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall, WS1 1TP.
Hours of Opening	Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 5.15pm Friday 8.45pm to 4.45pm
Telephone numbers	EH 01922 650000 TS 0845 330 3313 Out of Hours 01922 650000
E mail	environmentalhealth@walsall.gov.uk trading_standards@walsall.gov.uk
Website	www.walsall.gov.uk
Social Media	www.facebook.com/makemeasavvyshopper Twitter: @ehwalsall @savvyshopper

2.3 Scope of the Food Service

The enforcement of food related legislation is a joint responsibility between Environmental Health and Trading Standards: All services are provided by officers employed by Walsall Council.

Environmental Health provide the following services relating to Food:

1. Food safety/hygiene inspections.
2. Infectious disease investigations (food poisoning and water borne disease).
3. Microbiological food sampling.
4. Food safety advice to new and existing businesses including promotional and educational activities.
5. Food and food hygiene complaint investigations.
6. Private drinking water supply - monitoring and assessment.
7. Operation of the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.
8. Commercial complaints in respect of odour, noise, waste & drainage.
9. A statutory consultee in the respect of planning.
10. A Responsible Authority in terms of licence applications.
11. Export Certificates for food and interventions relating to Imported Foods.
12. Core member of Walsall Council Safety Advisory Group.

Trading Standards provide the following services relating to Food:

1. Food Standards inspections.
2. Feed Hygiene Inspections.
3. The investigation of complaints in relation to food fraud, labelling, contamination and composition.
4. Food sampling for compositional, nutritional and labelling conformity.
5. Food Standards advice to business.
6. Food Standards education to consumers.
7. Import certificates for food & interventions relating to imported foods.
8. A Responsible Authority in terms of licence applications.
9. Underage sales of alcohol and tobacco.

Licensing regulate the following Food related matters:

1. Late Night Refreshment Licences.
2. Street Trading Licences and Consents.
3. Personal and Premises Licences for Alcohol.

2.4 Demands on the Food Service

A profile of the 2318 food businesses registered with Walsall Council is as follows:

FSA CODE	PREMISES TYPE	NO. OF PREMISES
A	Primary Producer	27
C	Manufacturer and Packer	29
E	Importer/exporter	4
F	Distributors/transporters	59
G01	Supermarket/hypermarket	53
G02	Small retailer	493
G03	Other retailer	89
H01	Restaurant/cafe/canteen	331
H02	Hotel guest house	13
H03	Pub/club	213
H04	Takeaway	327
H05	Caring premises	159
H06	School/college	132
H07	Mobile unit	143
H08	Restaurant/caterer other	327
	Total	2458

There are 21 premises approved by the local authority to produce products of animal origin for distribution throughout the UK and Europe. There are no red meat slaughterhouses in the borough. The FSA Regulates a small-scale Halal poultry slaughterer in Walsall,.

There are 29 agricultural feeding-stuff (animal feed) establishments registered under the EU Feed Hygiene Regulation (183/2005) with the following breakdown of registration activities:

R6	Manufacture of pet foods	1 establishment
R7	Manufacture and/ or placing on the market of feed materials	20 establishments
R12	Food businesses selling co-products of the food industry which are destined as feed materials	1 establishment
R13	Livestock farms which do not mix feeds or mix feeds without additives	6 establishments
R14	Arable farms growing or selling crops for feed	1 establishment

Walsall as a Borough has a significant number of premises where English is not the primary language spoken by many of the staff. Within certain sectors of the food

industry there also tends to be a relatively high turnover of Food Business Operators meaning officers may not see the same person twice when carrying out visits. This is not conducive to building long-term positive relationships where compliance can be improved with mutual-cooperation.

Many food premises are opened in buildings not originally designed for such a purpose and therefore do not allow easy or economically viable compliance with the structural elements of food hygiene.

2.5 Regulation Policy

The Regulatory Services Enforcement Policy was approved by Cabinet on the 25th April 2018 it is available at this link <https://tinyurl.com/yb39zvt6>

3.0 SERVICE DELIVERY

3.1 Interventions at Food Establishments

Interventions are defined as activities designed to monitor, support and increase food law compliance within a food establishment. Interventions also include activities that are effective in supporting food businesses to achieve compliance, such as targeted education and advice or information and intelligence gathering.

The FSA considers that an intervention programme is central to a local regulatory and enforcement regime, and local authorities must ensure that such a programme is appropriately resourced.

Trading Standards Food Standards Interventions.

Food Standards interventions are applied in accordance with the Intelligence Operating Model, in a risk-based intelligence-led manner, so that resources are effectively targeted and directed at those businesses that present the greatest risk.

Interventions will also be based upon and result from the national, regional and local sampling programmes that we contribute to. A flexible approach to resourcing enables the service to respond appropriately to incidents and to ensure the necessary protection to the Borough's food chain. Additionally under the FSA's Recovery Plan all premises identified as high risk will receive an intervention.

Environmental Health Food Hygiene Interventions Risk-based Interventions

The pandemic restricted the delivery of Official Controls because of restrictions and the diversion of Officers from food onto Covid-19 enforcement duties. Consequently, a backlog of unrated food businesses or businesses whose inspections were overdue

increased. Therefore, the FSA introduced a national Recovery Plan (effective from 1st July 2021 to 31st March 2023) which required local authorities to re-start their food hygiene intervention programmes following the restrictions of the pandemic. The Recovery Plan directed the authority to complete on-site interventions for all establishments rated A, B, C (less than Broadly Compliant), D (less than Broadly Compliant) and C (Broadly Compliant). Implementation of Phase 2 of the Recovery Plan formed the basis of the authority’s 2022/23 service plan.

On 31st March 2023, the FSA ended its Recovery Plan and announced its intention to take a risk-based and pragmatic approach to performance management as services work to realign with the Food Law Code of Practice (the Code) and to ‘catch up’ on backlogs of lower risk premises created by the pandemic. For this purpose, the FSA expects that from 1st April 2023 local authorities will:

- Carry out due interventions for establishments that are back in the routine programme of interventions in accordance with the frequencies set out in the Code.
- Work towards realigning with the provisions set out in the Code from 1 April 2023 using the full range of flexibilities already offered by the Code.
- Continue to exercise a risk-based approach to the requirements set out in the Code based on available resource.

The table below shows the frequencies of interventions set by the intervention-rating scheme in the Code.

Category	Score	Minimum intervention frequency
A	92 or higher	At least every 6 months
B	72 to 91	At least every 12 months
C	52 to 71	At least every 18 months
D	31 to 51	At least every 24 months
E	0 to 30	A programme of Alternative Enforcement Strategies or interventions every three years

During 2023/24, prioritisation of interventions will be in accordance with milestones outlined in the last period of the Recovery Plan and in conjunction with local risk assessment and available intelligence having due regard to the Code.

The programmed number of interventions programmed for 2023/24 is as follows:

Risk Category	A	B	C (0-2)	C (3-5)	D (0-2)	D (30/40)	Unrated	Total
Number of interventions	10	58	33	240	11	138	110	600
Target	100%	100%	100%	Risk	100%	Risk	Risk	

NOTE: Risk = Inspection prioritised according to highest risk.

There are approximately 290 unrated businesses awaiting an inspection. The table below shows the breakdown of the type of these food businesses. Newly registered businesses are immediately prioritised for inspection and are categorised as either high, medium or low priority for inspection. There are substantial numbers of restaurants, takeaways and small retailers, which are likely to be categorised as high priority. Therefore, these businesses will also place a pressure on the capability of the service to complete planned interventions for rated business in accordance with the frequencies set out in the code.

Businesses A waiting Inspection (20th June 2023)	
Small Retailer	40
Mobile Food Unit	33
Restaurant/Cafe/Canteen	34
Take-Away	19
Pub/Club	6
Caring Premises	9
Restaurant/Caterer - Others	125
Distributors/Transporters	9
School/College	3
Retailer - Other	3
Importers/Exporters	3
Manufacturers and Packers	2
Manufacturers selling by retail	1
Supermarket/Hypermarket	3

In addition to the implementation of an intervention programme the service will respond to food related complaints and enquiries concerning food, food borne diseases, premises and practices during 2023/24. Based on an average calculated from the number of complaints and enquiries received during the periods 2021/22 and 2022/23 approximately 300 can be expected to be received during 2022/23.

Prioritisation

Should a situation occur whereby demand outstrips staffing levels our priority will be matters of highest risk to ensure the greatest level of protection to the public. These matters include:

- an unsafe practice is occurs which represents a significant hazard to health;

- a particular food handling or food preparation practice is found to entail a previously unsuspected hazard to public health;
- a foodstuff previously thought to be safe is found to be hazardous to health;
- a food with widespread distribution is found to be contaminated and thereby presents a significant hazard to public health;
- widely distributed foodstuff is the subject of fraud in labelling or presentation
- Notifications of single cases of significant infectious disease e.g. E coli 0157
- Outbreaks of infectious disease of any type

Consequently, this would have an adverse impact on lower risk work and would necessitate the development of a secondary strategy to deal with the backlog of work arising from the realignment of priorities. This could include:

- Lesser qualified Officers making a first response
- Qualified agency staff brought in on a temporary basis
- Response by phone/letter/email only
- Signposting to other agencies or legal advisors.

Walsall Council implemented the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme on the 1st April 2011: It is encouraging to see that the proportion of businesses that are ranked “Broadly Compliant” (scoring 3, 4 or 5) has generally increased year upon year, despite the continued financial pressure on businesses.

Rating	Number of Businesses									
	April 2013	April 2014	April 2015	April 2016	April 2017	April 2018	April 2019	April 2021	April 2022	April 2023
5 (Very Good)	328	373	585	565	679	725	751	785	768	884
4 (Good)	308	349	347	368	390	355	349	372	358	370
3 (Generally Satisfactory)	336	353	321	306	295	298	307	294	292	325
2 (Improvement Necessary)	130	121	98	91	91	89	67	51	58	36
1 (Major Improvement Necessary)	180	149	153	153	118	84	75	54	57	38
0 (Urgent Improvement Necessary)	10	8	15	11	8	8	4	1	0	2
% achieving satisfactory ratings	75.2	79.5	81	83	86.5	88.4	90.6	92.9	92.5	95.4

There are 2130 businesses are recorded on the FHRS, 1655 are rated with the other 475 being classified as either exempt, excluded, sensitive or awaiting inspection.

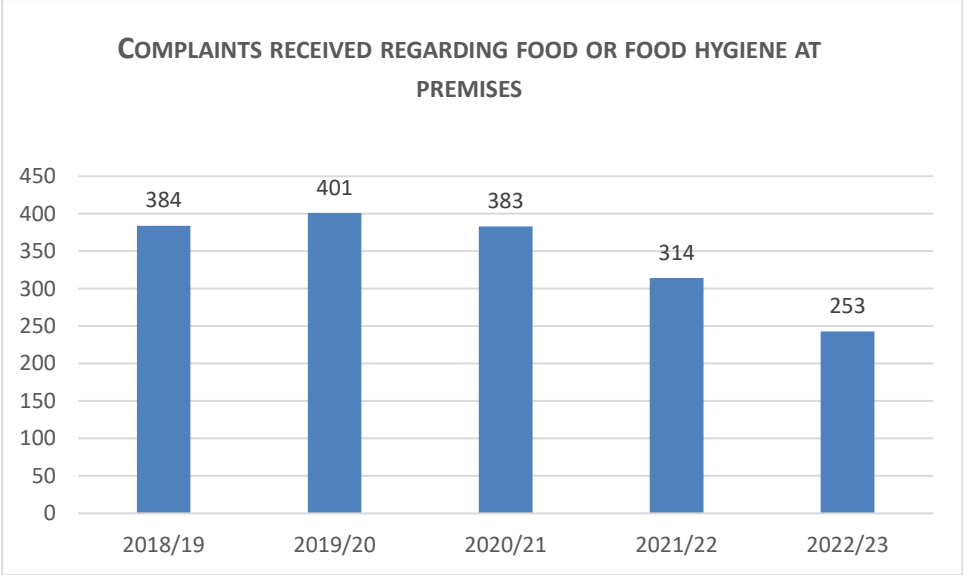
Taking ratings as 3 and above as satisfactory then 95.4% of rated Walsall Businesses are at least satisfactory with 4.6% requiring varying levels of improvement. Staff have receive training in the consistent rating of food premises and have attended a number of FSA training sessions relating to this matter. Therefore, these results should accurately reflect standards within the Borough.

We continue to support the introduction of legislation requiring the mandatory display of ratings stickers.

3.2 Food Complaints

Complaints are prioritised on the basis of the nature and severity of the matter reported. Many complaints relate to dissatisfaction with the condition of food and often fail because the continuity of evidence has been broken i.e. it is possible the contamination entered the food after opening. To allow staff to focus on areas of highest priority information will be made available to complainants on actions they may be able to take to resolve low risk complaints.

Environmental Health received 243 complaints relating to the condition of food and concerns over food practices or the hygiene of food premises in 2022/23 and 314 in 2021/22.



Trading Standards received 140 food and drink related complaints in 2021/22 and 129 in 2022/23 relating to out of date, food fraud, improperly described, contaminated and incorrectly labelled food.

3.3 HOME AUTHORITY PRINCIPLE AND PRIMARY AUTHORITY SCHEME

PRIMARY AUTHORITY

The Primary Authority Principle has its basis in law and is a government priority. The authority is permitted to recover its costs for advice given under the scheme and if the business follows, the “assured advice” then enforcement action such as a prosecution by other authorities is not likely to be successful. On the 2nd July 2014, Cabinet approved the adoption and charging regime for this scheme. To date no Primary Authority partnerships have been signed up to.

Home Authority Principle

This principle was developed as an aid to good enforcement practice and aims to:

- Encourage Authorities to place special emphasis on goods and services originating within their area.
- Provide businesses with a Home Authority source of guidance and advice.
- Support efficient liaison between Local Authorities.
- Provide a system for the resolution of problems and disputes.

The principle has the support of local authorities, Government, trade and industry associations, consumer and professional regulatory bodies.

3.4 Advice to Business

The authority has always provided appropriate and competent advice, to local businesses and residents, within available resource constraints.

In recent times there has been an increase in the number of people wanting to prepare food for sale in their domestic kitchens. Officers recognise that certain low risk food items such as cakes can be prepared in a domestic kitchen and a number of factsheets for domestic caterers have been produced.

The services website has been made easier to use, with information about setting up a food business and application forms that businesses and members of the public can download free of charge. Additional work is needed to update and amend older information in line with proposals set out in Walsall Councils Proud Programme work streams.

Where possible advice is given to businesses before they commence trading. It is easier to give advice on layout, equipment and practices at the planning stage before a business commences trading. Under the FHRS, a business that does not have a fully implemented Food Safety Management System cannot score higher than 1 (Major Improvement Necessary) so where time permits, officers carry out coaching visits to Food Business Operators to ensure they understand the importance of this requirement.

The Environmental Health twitter account @EHWalsall has 1006 followers and over 6428 messages have been 'tweeted'.

The Trading Standards Twitter account @Savvyshopper6 has 562 followers and has tweeted over 2883 messages with 48300 impressions in the past year [1st June to 31st May 2023].

We will continue to use social media for communicating food safety, trading standards, infectious disease and health and safety messages. The Tweets are made by officers and managers within the team and are regularly retweeted by other councils, businesses and members of the public.

3.5 Food Sampling

Microbiological Food Sampling

Microbiological food sampling is carried out to meet four main objectives:

- To determine the current state of food safety in the Borough
- To improve the effectiveness of food hygiene inspections.
- To investigate suspect cases of food poisoning linked with local businesses.
- To investigate complaints about food.

Microbiological examinations will be carried out using credits allocated by Public Health (England). Samples will be taken by qualified staff.

Should an outbreak of food borne disease or some major issue be identified at a manufacturer or other food business Officers will undertake relevant reactive sampling.

Sampling Programme 2022/23 Sandwich Manufacturers.

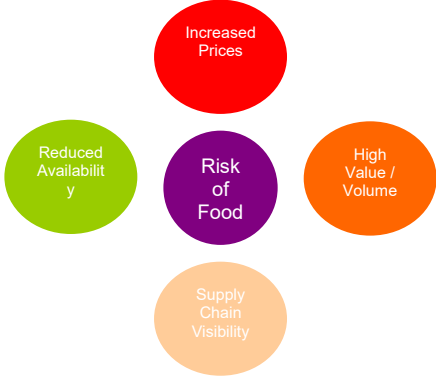
The Food Safety team conducted a proactive study to examine the safety of extended shelf lives (beyond industry guidance) applied to sandwiches by sandwich manufacturers. The study involved the sampling of sandwiches to carry out microbiological durability testing. The team linked with the UK Health Security Agency to conduct microbiological testing of a range of sandwiches from each manufacturer within the borough.

Food Sampling (Food Standards)

The Trading Standards Service targets its proactive sampling at locally produced foods, those products/ingredients from companies that manufacture in, are based in,

or import into Walsall. In addition, foods are targeted which are causing current concerns. These are identified through communication with the Food Standards Agency, the National Food Crime Unit, the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the European Commission; through local, regional and national intelligence held by local authorities; and through consultation with the Public Analyst.

Emerging food fraud risks can also be identified by looking at economic drivers: High value/high volume products, products in short supply; products with rising prices; products with a complex global food chain. Looking at some of these factors gives us a chance of identifying the next 'horsegate'.



All sampling undertaken by officers is in accordance with relevant legislation and all formal food and animal feed samples are taken in accordance with the relevant Food or Feed Law Codes of Practice.

Samples are analysed and/or examined by the Service's Public/Agriculture Analyst appointed in accordance with the procedures laid down in Regulations and relevant Food and Feed Law Codes of Practice. Alternatively, some samples are examined/tested in house, if it is appropriate to do so.

Food Standards Sampling Projects 2020/21

The Trading Standards service took 38 samples during 2021/22 with 74% being analysed as unsatisfactory. This mainly related to the authenticity of Yellow Tale wine but also included issues with undeclared allergens, labelling and meat substitution. Investigations are ongoing with a number of these issues.

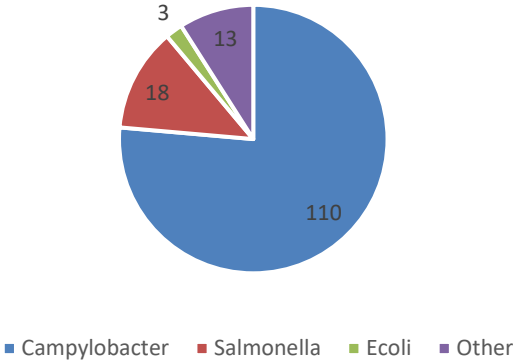
3.6 Control and Investigation of Food Related Infectious Disease

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is appointed to act as Proper Officer for Walsall Council in respect of infectious disease notifications. UKHSA notify Environmental Health of food poisoning cases in the Borough via secure electronic communication. Environmental Health have a statutory duty to carry out an investigation to ascertain the source of the illness and check to ensure that there is no risk of the illness spreading further.

Environmental Health staff work closely with colleagues in UKHSA and have powers to formally exclude people from work or school if they are classed as a high-risk case and their actions place other people at risk of catching communicable disease.

Campylobacter remains the primary pathogen with 110 notified cases in the Borough in 2022/23. A breakdown of all notified cases of infectious diseases is shown in the pie chart below. During this period, the service also received allegations of food poisoning where people claim to have been ill but have not had a formal diagnosis. This led to an additional 52 cases of potential food poisoning highlighting the large amount of undiagnosed food borne illness that may be present in society but not formally identified and recorded.

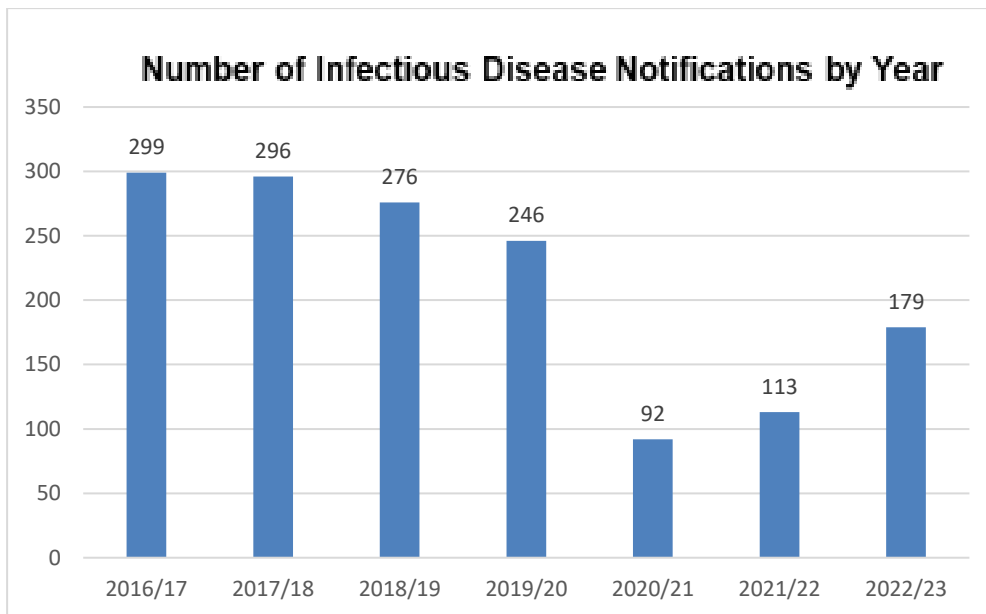
INFECTIOUS DISEASES REPORTED TO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH IN 2022/23



Responses to infectious disease notifications are measured against the PHE document - Roles and Responsibilities for Investigation of Gastrointestinal Infectious Diseases. Having no specific out of hour's duty staff for responding to infectious disease notifications does however pose a difficulty in dealing with emergency notifications i.e. those required within 24 hours.

This issue is currently addressed by invoking the Emergency Planning procedure of identifying and contacting relevant Senior Managers. The services response rate to infectious disease notifications which is agreed with UK-Health Security Agency currently stands at 90%

In a large-scale outbreak, the Council could draft in staff from other services to assist in some of the basic duties. For additional resource from expert or qualified officers assistance may have to be requested from other West Midlands Councils through the Memorandum of Understanding that all seven Councils have signed up to.



3.7 Food Safety Incidents

The Food Standards Agency issues information about product withdrawals and recalls to let consumers and local authorities know about problems associated with food. This information is issued electronically to Environmental Health and Trading Standards.

A Product Withdrawal Information Notice or a Product Recall Information Notice is issued where a solution to the problem has been put in place – the product has been, or is being, withdrawn from sale or recalled from consumers, for example.

A Food Alert for Action is issued where enforcement by authorities is required. These notices and alerts are often issued in conjunction with a product withdrawal.

During 2022/23 Trading Standards instigated 2 food alerts and corresponding product withdrawals

3.8 Liaison with other organisations

The Authority works in partnership with the following organisations either on an ongoing basis or as the result of targeted work programmes:

1. Food Standards Agency (FSA)
2. UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)
3. Director of Public Health
4. Eurofins – Public Analyst
5. Central England Trading Standards Authorities Management Board
6. Central England Environmental Health Management Board (CEEHMB)

7. Department of Health, DEFRA and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)

CEEHMB Food Liaison Group

This Group represents the seven West Midlands councils but is also linked by a coordinating board to Food Liaison Groups in Staffordshire and Shropshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire. It aims to provide consistency of enforcement, acts as a facilitator for benchmarking activities and provides 'standardisation' exercises to facilitate consistency. It provides comments on consultations on behalf of the region and provides a valuable link between local authorities and the FSA.

CEntSA Food Standards Liaison Group

The above Group is made up of food standards lead officers plus the regional Public Analysts. Walsall's Food Standards Lead officer is Chair of this group and as such is responsible for leading on regional projects including sampling, guidance to business, legislative consultations and sharing best practice.

National Food Standards and Labelling Focus Group

Walsall's Food Standards Lead officer also sits on the National Food Standards and Labelling Focus Group, which gives guidance to regulators and industry as well as working with FSA, DEFRA and DoH on consultations and codes of practice.

Knowledge Hub

The Knowledge Hub is the LGA's professional network, which helps people in local government connect and share in a secure environment. It is used as a vital tool for sharing intelligence and best practice, both regionally and nationally.

Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) and the European Commission

This system provides EU food and feed authorities with an effective tool to exchange information about measures taken responding to serious risks. This exchange of information helps Member States to act more rapidly and in a coordinated manner in response to a health threat caused by food or feed. However, the EU-UK trade agreement does not provide the UK with access to the RASFF but it does ensure exchange of food safety information, which the FSA can then use as part of its incident detection and management system.

IDB and FSA Intelligence Databases

Intelligence on food issues is also collected by Trading Standards departments in the CEntSA region through the national Intelligence Database - IDB which also inputs into

the Food Standards Agency food fraud database. Data from IDB and the FSA database is used to produce a Regional Control Strategy.

Walsall Council Safety Advisory Group

A representative from Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing attends the Safety Advisory Group to provide advice and direction to event organisers so that events operate safely – food safety is a significant part of the application form and discussions at the meetings.

3.9 Food Safety and Standards Promotional Work

Social Media Campaigns

Environmental Health and Trading Standards use Social Media such as Twitter and Facebook to communicate current messages of local, regional or national importance. This can include checking Food Ratings, Food Alerts, safe summer food, BBQ's, picnic safety, Christmas food preparation etc.

Presentations

From time to time and where resources allow staff will carry out presentations to schools, colleges or other forums to promote the work of the service and the profession.

Trading Standards Business News.

CEnTSA publish a quarterly online business newsletter covering a range of regulatory articles. Walsall Environmental Health and Trading Standards are regularly contributors notably for food safety, allergens, food labelling and have also contributed to articles in relation to waste duty of care, licensing of events and pest control.

The articles can be found at <http://tsbn.org.uk/>.

4.0 RESOURCES

4.1 FINANCIAL ALLOCATION

The table below shows the cost of Food Safety for 2012/22, 2022/23 and includes an estimate of its cost for 2023/2024.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 Estimate
Staffing Costs	347,787	301,955	363,573
Support Services	0	0	0
Supplies and Services	13,818	11,446	12,068
Transport Costs	3,512	944	3,799
Income	-9,241	-7,057	-7,042
Expenditure	355,876	307,287	372,337

4.2 Staffing Allocation

Environmental Health and Trading Standards staff also undertake a great deal of work in relation to health and safety, animal health and welfare, skin piercing, public funerals, product safety, rogue trading, weights and measures, age restricted sales, counterfeiting etc.

The allocation below relates primarily to the food safety function.

The Team Leader Environmental Health and Team Leader Trading Standards are responsible for delivery of their respective services in line with current corporate, regional and national priorities.

Presently there are 11 permanent Environmental Health posts, of which 10 require a qualification to undertake food safety duties of which 5.7 FTE's work predominantly on Food Safety, 2.02 FTE's work on Health and Safety related matters the remaining 2.3 FTE's work on animal licensing, nuisance, licensing and other regulatory activity. Additionally, 1 FTE Food Safety Support Officer undertakes food safety duties and is subject to a temporary fixed term contract which will expire during the course of 2023/24 and which can only be extended if funding is secured to support the post

Trading Standards is delivered in one Borough-wide team of 2.7 FTE Senior TSO's, 4 FTE TSO's, 1 FTE Enforcement Officer and 1 Compliance Officer (0.8 FTE) supervised by a Team Leader. The amount of resource dedicated to Food Standards equates to 1 FTE members of staff.

The amount of resource dedicated to Feed Hygiene equates to 0.1 FTE members of staff. The service also uses a contractor to undertake certain aspects of work coordinated regionally using national funding.

Income received from a Service Level Agreement with Public Health supports commissioned work relating to seven objectives as priority work areas including increasing local intelligence relating to the capability opportunity and motivation of takeaway outlets to provide health options.

The qualifications and competency of food officers is set out in legislation (Regulation (EC) No.882/2004 on Official Controls) and implemented in the Food Law Code of Practice published by the FSA.

The Code has clarified the requirements for suitably qualified and competent officers and this will be reviewed each year. This could result in additional training costs and time out of the Office attending training courses or similar.

Environmental Health Officers all possess a BSc. or MSc. in Environmental Health and are registered with the Environmental Health Officers Registration Board (EHORB). The Food Safety Officer has a Higher Certificate in Food Premises Inspection from the EHORB. Trading Standards Staff working in food and feed law enforcement possess the relevant qualifications required by the Food/Feed Law Code of Practice.

For both services the level of staffing described above allows for compliance with a basic statutory service or relevant and agreed national or regional priorities. Where work is required beyond that basic service the service will either not be able to fulfil that additional requirement or have to stop other statutory functions in order to carry out the work. In the event of a major emergency all staff will be directed to work to control the emergency and basic work will cease for an agreed period - recovery from this will inevitably take time.

4.3 Staff Development

Walsall Council has a regime of Annual Performance Conversations where action plans including training requirements are drawn up for each staff member. These reviews will take account of the food law code of practice requirements as set out above. This may pose an additional cost to the service to ensure all staff are fully qualified and competent.

External and internal training provision will then be identified in accordance with staff and service requirements. To maximise budgetary provision wherever possible support is given to courses provided by CEnTSA or other Local Authorities who have proven to be cost effective training suppliers. The FSA has recently withdrawn much of its free training due to their own budget constraints and so alternative providers will need to be sought. Officers are also able to identify forthcoming training via the CEnTSA annual training plan. In house development in the form of workshops and cascade training is also utilised where appropriate.

4.4 Officer Training Programme

- Legalities and Technicalities of Food Law Enforcement
- Traceability e learning
- Licensing and Street Trading Training Workshop
- Outbreak Investigation and Management
- Vacuum Packing e learning
- Nutritional Health Claims
- Food Allergens
- Labelling and Compositional Standards

5.0 QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND INTERNAL MONITORING

5.1 Quality Assessment and Internal Monitoring

The Team Leader makes periodic accompanied visits with Environmental Health Staff this includes the checking of formal notices and paperwork.

Officers will participate in national and regional standardisation exercises, benchmarking and peer reviews as and when they are organised.

It will be the Management Team's responsibility to react swiftly to performance monitoring reports. This will include reflection on inspections where non-compliant premises are found to ensure the right level of intervention has taken place.

The Head of Community Safety and Enforcement will undertake a regular assessment of the work of the service culminating in the Annual Review, which is part of the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan process.

The Councils Internal Audit Team last inspected Environmental Health in 2012 giving an assurance level of Significant.

The FSA last audited Environmental Health in 2010 with a revisit in 2011 on the subject of Local Authority Assessment of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) Compliance in Food Business Establishments.

Prior to the introduction of the Recovery Plan the Service provided data to the FSA each May through the LAEMS return. The FSA scrutinised this data and reported it on its web site. During 2022/23, the FSA conducted periodic Food Hygiene – Local Authority “temperature check surveys” to monitor the implementation of the Recovery Plan by local authorities. Presently, LAEMS is under review and the FSA is exploring new data collection mechanisms. As part of this process, the FSA is currently undertaking a “new burdens assessment” in respect of proposed new annual and quarterly surveys for local authority returns.

6.0 WORKPLAN AND REVIEW

Action	Target		Action lead
Implement the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan	Target 23/24	Plan to be submitted to Cabinet and Council for approval Quarterly monitoring of the Plan shared with Management team and staff.	David Elrington/ Stuart Powell/ Paul Rooney
	Review	To be approved at Cabinet on 6 th September 2023	
Identify and carry out appropriate interventions at high risk premises in relation to food standards	Target 23/24	Premises requiring intervention to be agreed. 100% of identified high risk premises to receive an appropriate intervention	David Elrington/ Stuart Powell
	Review	All high risk premises have received intervention alongside others agreed as above.	
Review all new food premises and send Food Standards advice/questionnaire as appropriate. Results from questionnaires will be used to prioritise interventions in line with the Recovery Plan	Target 23/24	Review all new food registrations. Send advice/questionnaire to all premises identified as potential food standards risk Prioritise interventions as necessary	David Elrington/ Stuart Powell
	Review	All new food standards premises to receive advice/questionnaire or physical intervention	
Realign inspections with the Food Law Code of Practice (the Code) and to 'catch up' on backlogs of lower risk premises created by the pandemic	Target 23/24	Due interventions for establishments rated Category A, B, C and less than Broadly Compliant and D and less than Broadly Compliant that are back in the routine programme of interventions to be undertaken in accordance with the frequencies set out in the Code. Implementation of an ongoing programme of interventions in respect of establishments rated C and Broadly Compliant and unrated establishments adopting a risk based approach and using flexibilities offered by the Code	David Elrington/ Paul Rooney

	Review	On-site interventions undertaken for establishments rated Category A, B, C and less than Broadly Compliant and D and less than Broadly Compliant that are back in the routine programme of intervention in accordance with the frequencies set out in the Code. Implement an ongoing programme of interventions in respect of establishments rated C and Broadly Compliant and unrated establishments adopting a risk based approach and using flexibilities offered by the Code	
Maintain the Food Hygiene Rating System	Target 23/24	Fortnightly uploads to the national database Results reported back to Inspecting officers All appeals dealt with in compliance with the brand standard.	David Elrington/ Paul Rooney
	Review	Uploads completed fortnightly.	
Carry out a reactive microbiological food sampling programme focusing on high risk premises and manufacturers	Target 23/24	Obtain and test food samples from high-risk premises and manufacturers where failures or issues are identified and implement appropriate follow up action.	David Elrington/ Paul Rooney
	Review	Ongoing	
Respond to complaints relating to hygiene or condition of food premises.	Target 23/24	Investigate complaints in accordance with current service standards and enforcement policy Respond to anonymous complaints on a risk assessed basis.	David Elrington/ Paul Rooney
	Review	Number of responses Response times	
Conduct a review of documented policies and procedures relating	Target November 2023	Number of documented policies and procedures reviewed.	Paul Rooney

to enforcement activities covered by this Standard.	Review	Monthly	
Implement the CEnTSA regional food standards sampling programme	Target 22/23	Premises requiring sampling to be agreed. 100% of premises receive a sampling visit 100% of premises where failures or issues identified receive a follow up intervention	David Elrington/ Stuart Powell
	Review	CEnTSA did not produce a regional sampling programme so no action possible	
Implement a local food standards sampling programme	Target 22/23	Premises requiring sampling to be agreed. 100% of premises receive a sampling visit 100% of premises where failures or issues identified receive a follow up intervention	David Elrington/ Stuart Powell
	Review	Sampling and follow-ups completed	
Implement the FSA Feed delivery programme	Target 22/23	Premises requiring inspection to be agreed. 100% of premises receive an inspection 100% of premises where failures or issues identified receive a follow up intervention	David Elrington/ Stuart Powell
	Review	All premises inspected and follow-ups completed	
Respond to all disease notifications using timescales developed by UK-Health Security Agency	Target 23/24	100% response within UK-Health Security Agency recommended timescales	David Elrington/ Paul Rooney
	Review	Responses made within UK-Health Security Agency recommended timescales.	
Respond to requests for advice and visits to new premises within 21 days.	Target 23/24	Written, verbal or on-site response to requests for advice/enquiries to be made within 21 days (Due to resources limitations it is not possible to generally grant visits to new premises if requested)	David Elrington/

		Re-establish web authors and a quarterly check of business advice on walsall.gov.uk Regular Tweets of relevant business advice.	Stuart Powell/ Paul Rooney
	Review	Number of responses TS response to all requests within 21 days EH response to requests within 21 days. .	
	Review		
Review training opportunities and number of CPD hours per Officer quarterly.	Target 23/24	Number of hours per officer and competency submissions submitted, reviewed and action determined. Officers to complete required 20 hours of CPD.	David Elrington/ Stuart Powell/ Paul Rooney
	Review	Training opportunities are reviewed weekly and CPD hours reviewed quarterly	

Enforcement Actions 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

Action	Number	Description
Food Improvement Notices	3	Enforcement Notice
Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notices	5	Closure of food premises
Emergency Prohibition Orders	5	Court Order confirming closure of food premises
Simple Cautions	2	Formal caution as alternative to prosecution
Prosecutions	2	Conviction secured in Court
Written Warnings	686	Informal letter

CLOSURES

During 2022/2023, 5 premises were found to present an imminent risk to health and were closed immediately until all necessary works were carried out.

Closures	Premises	Health Risk Condition
5 th April 2022	Unique Jamaican Food Store	Mouse infestation
15 th September 2022	The Tannery Fish Bar	Rat infestation
11 th October 2022	Chicken Palace	Cockroach infestation
27 th October 2022	SM Butchers	Cockroach infestation
31 st December 2022	Pit Stop	Mouse infestation

PROSECUTIONS

On 30th September 2022, Dixy Chicken, 30 Bradford Street, Walsall was prosecuted at Dudley Magistrates' Court after Environmental Health Officers had served a Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notice requiring the closure of the premises in August 2021 following the discovery of infestations of rats and mice. The Food Business Operator was sentenced at Wolverhampton Crown Court where the Court imposed a 4-month curfew with electronic tagging on the defendant who was also required to pay £400 costs.

On 18th January 2023, Lazeeza Hayat Sweet Centre, 136 Caldmore Road, Walsall was prosecuted at Dudley Magistrates' Court after Environmental Health Officers had served a Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notice requiring the closure of the premises in February 2022 following the discovery of infestations of rats and mice. The Court imposed a 4-month suspended prison sentence on the Food Business Operator who was also fined £1864, required to pay costs of £675.88 and pay a victim surcharge of £738.

6.1 Review against the Service Plan

The requirement to implement Phase 2 of the Recovery Plan determined the formulation of the Food Service Plan 2022/23. In particular, it required that:

- 1 All establishments rated Category A should have received an on-site intervention in accordance with the 6-month inspection frequency set out in the Food Law Code of Practice.
- 2 All establishments rated Category B should have received an on-site intervention by 30th June 2022.
- 3 All establishments rated Category C and less than Broadly Compliant should have received an on-site intervention by 30th September 2022.
- 4 All establishments rated Category D and less than Broadly Compliant should have received an on-site intervention by 31st December 2022.
- 5 All establishments rated Category C and Broadly Compliant or better should have received an on-site intervention by 31st March 2023.
- 6 New and refreshed food hygiene ratings given following appropriate interventions during the course of 2022/23.

The Food Service Plan 2022/23 was aligned to these requirements. Generally, the service met the targets set in the Recovery Plan for Category B, Category C and less than Broadly Compliant, and Category D and less than Broadly Compliant establishments. In particular, the service reported the following outputs at the end of 2022/23:

- 1 7 Category A establishments received an inspection and no establishments in this category were overdue an inspection on 1st April 2023.
- 2 59 Category B establishments received an inspection and only one establishment in this category was overdue an inspection on 1st April 2023.
- 3 26 Category C and less than Broadly Compliant establishments received an inspection and only one establishment in this category was overdue an inspection on 1st April 2023.
- 4 30 Category D and less than Broadly Compliant establishments received an inspection and only one establishment in this category was overdue an inspection on 1st April 2023.

- 5 98 rated Category C and Broadly Compliant establishments received an inspection and 239 establishments in this category were overdue an inspection on 1st April 2024.
- 6 175 unrated establishments received initial inspections and were subsequently rated during 2022/23. Inspections were allocated on a prioritised risk basis. On 1st April 2022/23, there remained 301 unrated establishments.

During 2022/23, Officers noted a deterioration in standards because of prolonged inspection inactivity during the pandemic, which increased the average inspection time. Consequently, this reduced the extent of the food hygiene inspection programme.

Other areas of reported food related work undertaken by Environment Health during 2022/23 included:

- 1 The registration of 301 new food businesses.
- 2 Responding to 253 enquiries/complaints relating to hygiene, practices and premises.
- 3 Responding to 179 food related infectious disease notifications received from UK-Health Security Agency.
- 4 The emergency closure of 5 food businesses following the service of Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notices
- 5 The service of 3 Food Hygiene Improvement Notices.
- 6 The issue of 686 inspection reports/written warnings.
- 7 The completion of 2 Food Hygiene prosecutions.
- 8 The collection of 18 food samples in conjunction with the service's sandwich manufacturers initiative.

6.2 Identification of any variation from service plan

2022/23 was a challenging year and the target set by the Recovery Plan to undertake on-site interventions at all establishments rated Category C and Broadly Compliant or better by 31st March 2023 could not be met. This was attributable to a combination of factors including insufficient Officers, inspections taking longer to complete because of a deterioration of standards in some businesses following the suspension of inspections during the pandemic and because of other non-food demands on the service. The demand for inspections also increased because of a large number of new registrations (301 in 2022/23). The challenge was reflected by there still being 301 unrated establishments and 239 Category C and Broadly Compliant establishments overdue an inspection on 1st April 2023.

Cooperative working between Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Licensing will continue to stop the creation of duplicate premises and other anomalies

Improvements to the services ICT system including linking to the corporate address gazetteer should also assist with reducing duplicate or inaccurately recorded premises.

The number of compliant businesses using the FHRS system is 95.4% this is lower than regional (95.7%) or national average (96.8%). We believe our figures are accurate and representative. They have continued to improve each year since the start of the FHRS system. Walsall has a higher percentage of total rated premises (77.9%) in comparison to the West Midlands regional average (74.4%). The national average is 80%.

The following strains on the service, during 2023/24, have been identified:

- Following the ending of the Recovery Plan the FSA now expects local authorities to re-align their services with the Code and catch up on the backlogs created by the pandemic. The service does not have the capacity or the resilience to undertake the number of interventions required to do this. In order to meet these requirements approximately 470 Category A, B, C and non-compliant businesses and 70 high and medium risk unrated businesses require an onsite intervention.
- Hygiene standards have deteriorated in some businesses following the pandemic, inspections are taking longer and this has increased the need for formal action. For example, during a two-week period in May 2023, three businesses were closed using emergency powers because of rodent infestations. Although formal enforcement action is a key component of the Food Law Service Plan it has a major impact on programmed inspection work. It is estimated that closures and prosecution equate to 30 or more programmed inspections. However, it is considered that they are equally, if not more, significant than programmed work since they identify and tackle the most serious premises or products.
 - The backlog of unrated businesses is likely to be sustained by the registration of new business registrations. It is projected that the authority will receive approximately 300 new registrations during 2023/24.
 - Other service demands have prevented officers from undertaking food safety duties. Since July 2022, it has been necessary to deploy a food safety officer in the Health and Safety team to assist with a criminal investigation relating to serious and multiple cases of lead poisoning. This deployment is likely to continue in 2023/24.
 - An Officer is currently taking maternity leave until early in 2024, which will reduce the team's capacity.
 - The 'churn' of Food Businesses is an issue within Walsall where more than 10% of businesses change hands in any given year – some businesses change hands 2-3 times per year. Whilst this can lead to improvements in the operation of a

business (if investment is made) it can also lead to inconsistent approaches, poor compliance levels and a decline in standards, which the officers must repeatedly deal with.

- The development and introduction of protocols to deal with allergens will continue to be an ongoing issue during 2023/24 because their implementation will increase the time to complete inspections. Additionally, the introduction in October 2021 of a law on allergen labelling for pre-packed foods for direct sale has increased regulatory controls that have to be verified during inspections.
- The authority has been engaged in a transformation programme aimed at making it more able to respond to future and ongoing challenges. However, the implementation of the programme has yet to benefit the food service and make a positive impact on service delivery.

The following actions to mitigate these strains during 2023/24 have been identified:

- As an interim measure, in order to help mitigate the vacancies arising from the retirement of a Food Safety Officer and an EHO taking maternity leave it is hoped to continue the temporary employment of Food Safety Support Officers to undertake food inspections until recruitment issues can be resolved.
- The shortfall in inspections has been listed on the Services Risk Register in terms of the impact it could have in terms of the view of the Food Standards Agency but also in terms of the impact on traders and the public.
- The shortfall in inspections has been reported to the Health Protection Forum, which meets to provide assurance to the Director of Public Health that the health of the public in Walsall is being adequately safeguarded.
- Matters relating to food safety are regularly discussed and updates provided at monthly Portfolio Holder meetings where service and senior managers and the elected member for this area of work meet to discuss issues within the service.

6.3 Areas of Improvement

In addition to those activities that will mitigate strains on the service the following areas of improvement or activities will be necessary for 2023/24:

- Reducing the administrative burden of food inspections by reviewing and streamlining inspection protocols, developing documentation to expedite the preparation of inspection reports and facilitating a greater use of electronic filing

systems. This will include a review by the Team Leader – Environmental Health of documented policies and procedures relating to enforcement activities.

- The majority of food businesses are involved in catering and have commercial premises from which they trade. Increasingly, many businesses in the retail and catering sectors are moving to domestic and on-line services. This means that many of these businesses, which are subject to the same regulatory compliance rules and checks, require greater resource to track and monitor such activities.
- Dark kitchens, which are businesses operating under the radar of Food Authorities from domestic premises and non-registered food premises, continue to be a high- risk concern. Any complaints or intelligence identifying the existence of such premises will be assigned a high priority for intervention.
- Ghost businesses trading under a variety of different names are also regulated effectively by maintaining the M3 database and retaining a single registration and property index for all the trader names.
- The Environmental Health Information Management system (Northgate M3) is used to maintain and manage all food premises records, all inspections and other related activities. A new additional software system (Assure) will be brought in on-line within the next 12 months to supplement the existing database and provide more functionality to better facilitate customer interaction with the service.
- Continue to monitor and develop a priority rating/intelligence based system for existing businesses that can be used to target work effectively taking into account statutory responsibilities in relation to the Food Law Code of Practice and FHRS Brand Standard
- Ongoing review of training and development needs in order to identify how staff can continue to be compliant with the Food Law Code of Practice Competency Framework. Specifically during 2023/24 focussed training and policy development is needed around allergens
- Continue to review the various registration and licensing processes internally so that businesses are identified and recorded appropriately e.g. Street Trading Permits, Late Night Refreshment and Premises Licences, Food Registrations and that intelligence flows around the Regulatory Services appropriately and effectively.
- Identifying efficient work methods to cope with diminishing resources using resources available as part of the Proud Programme – customer contact, income and IT development.

- Continue developing relationships with other services and partners to assist with identification of Modern Day Slavery and human trafficking and other community safety priorities.

Cabinet – 18 October 2023

Contracting arrangements for Integrated Sexual Health Services and Healthy Child Programme 0-19 Services

Portfolio: Councillor G. Flint – Wellbeing, Leisure and Public Spaces

Related portfolios: Councillor S. Elson – Children’s Services

Service: Public Health

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

To ensure Walsall Council continues to provide robust Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health and Healthy Child Programme (0-19) services using an appropriate and agreed commissioning mechanism from 1 April 2024.

2. Summary

2.1 On 14 December 2022, Cabinet approved entering a Section 75 Partnership arrangement with Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust for delivery of:

- an Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health Service that provides contraception, sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing and treatment, and genitourinary medicine.
- the Healthy Child Programme 0-19, providing health visiting and school nursing services to children 0-19 years and their families in Walsall, as well as teenage pregnancy prevention and support services.

2.2 This formal partnership is currently in the process of being established, for a 12-month period. The partnership contract is therefore due to expire on 31 March 2024.

2.3 A Prior Information Notice (PIN) exercise was undertaken by Walsall Council in August 2023 to determine pre-market interest levels for either an Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health Service or HCP 0-19. This related to pre-market engagement only and did not form part of any formal procurement process.

- 2.4 Both services had organisations who expressed interest at this stage, however they are not bound to participate in any future procurement exercise.
- 2.5 During the pre-market engagement exercise, a review was undertaken to inform the decision-making process around extending the Section 75 partnership. In summary, the services are showing improvement on the position in 2022 as evidenced by:
- better data capture and reporting
 - improved transparency and working partnership between public health commissioners and providers
 - providing strategically important and mandated services that meet the Council's future ambitions.
- 2.6 However, significant challenges remain in terms of needing to enhance access to sexual health services (redesign currently being implemented) to meet growing need, and also to improve capacity and continue service improvements within 0-19 services on the background of budget reductions over recent years.
- 2.7 Public Health are seeking permission to extend the existing Section 75 Partnership Agreement with Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust for the delivery of integrated sexual and reproductive health services and Healthy Child Programme 0-19 for 2 years until April 2026. This will be underpinned by a robust and open approach to contract monitoring and review, quality improvement and financial management.
- 2.8 A two-year extension would allow for:
- a full consultation around both specifications to ensure Best Value.
 - exploration of opportunities associated with the Provider Selection Regime (PSR), which is a new set of rules (to be introduced by the end of 2023) for arranging healthcare services in England by organisations. This includes local authorities¹.
 - an opportunity to fully evaluate the Section 75 agreement in place.
 - an opportunity to benchmark both the Integrated Sexual Health Service and the Healthy Child Programme 0-19 with other services in terms of costs and outcomes, alongside undertaking a detailed exercise with Walsall Healthcare Trust to understand total financial resource available for current services.
 - redesign and recovery of services to Walsall residents, reducing disruption at a critical point in these processes.

¹ [Provider Selection Regime: supplementary consultation on the detail of proposals for regulations - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/provider-selection-regime-supplementary-consultation-on-the-detail-of-proposals-for-regulations)

2.9 Terms have been agreed for the use of four consulting rooms within the new Hatherton Medical Centre on Hatherton Road under a licence agreement for the delivery of sexual health services. The licence allows the use of the fully equipped consulting rooms and ancillary accommodation within the centre and reception facilities. The licence fee is payable on a daily rate and is estimated to be approximately £101,550 per annum. This will be paid for through the Public Health grant.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That Cabinet approve extending the existing Section 75 partnership arrangement to provide Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health services in Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust commencing 1 April 2024 for two years until 31 March 2026 to the value of £1.80m.

3.2 That Cabinet approve extending the existing Section 75 partnership arrangement to provide the Healthy Child Programme 0-19 delivered by Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust commencing 1 April 2024 for two years until 31 March 2026 to the value of £5.14m (inclusive of 5% uplift for 2023/24).

3.3 That Cabinet approve the take up of a licence agreement for the use of consulting rooms in Hatherton Medical Centre for the delivery of sexual health services on the terms set out in paragraph 4.11 of this report, to the value of £101,550 per annum.

4. Report detail

Overview of sexual and reproductive health services

Service description: Integrated Sexual and Health Service

4.1. Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is not just about preventing disease. It also means promoting good sexual health in a wider context, including relationships, sexuality, and sexual rights.

4.2. Walsall's specialist Integrated Sexual Health service provides service users with open access to confidential, non-judgemental services, including:

- sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and blood borne virus testing (including HIV), treatment and management
- HIV prevention including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)
- the full range of contraceptive provision
- health promotion and prevention including relevant vaccinations

- 4.3. SRH is not only an important clinical service, but it also provides a key public health function, including reducing the onward transmission of infections to avoid spread among the population. It is also important that approaches are tailored to the needs of different local populations.

Developments since the last Cabinet report

- 4.4. At the December 2022 Cabinet meeting, Public Health officers requested time to comprehensively assess the opportunities and risks of a re-designed service and proposed changes. Since then, they have:
- Implemented the new National Service Specification including improved data collection and reporting to ensure new KPIs are met.
 - Increased transparency and data reporting, including on out of area activity.
 - Increased competency of the SRH nurses through training, allowing them to have their own clinics for certain areas of SRH. This has reduced waiting times for complex procedures.
 - Secured support from an independent web designer to ensure the accessibility of the SRH website, with use of appropriate language and images. The service and Public Health will be able to access high level data to support public health planning and service design.
 - The service is now delivering some outreach health promotion visits, however these are currently targeted at more vulnerable residents.

Current service context

- 4.5. The LGA has identified², in the context of the dramatic increases in syphilis and gonorrhoea diagnoses, the continued spread of antibiotic-resistant sexual infection, challenges accessing contraception and the evolving spread of Mpox, it is more important than ever to ensure that sexual health is prioritised and appropriately funded. Walsall has the highest rate of syphilis in the West Midlands, alongside Stoke on Trent.
- 4.6. In addition, the LGA recognises that local authorities are struggling to meet increased demand for sexual health services.
- 4.7. The following impacts have been seen over recent years in Walsall:
- *Reduced access to service* – resulting in the closure of outreach and community clinics, so residents were required to travel across the borough to the remaining site at the Manor Hospital.

² [Sexual health services at risk of breaking point: LGA responds to UKHSA statistics on new STI diagnoses | Local Government Association](#)

- *Increased inequalities* – the closure of outreach services that targeted those who are most likely to have poor sexual health, including vulnerable populations, which has left them increasingly exposed.
- *Increased number of certain transmittable diseases in the borough*
- *Removal of prevention and promotion services including health adviser posts in clinics* - these are professionals trained in giving advice to patients newly diagnosed with infections, and in tracing and notifying current and past sexual partners so that they can be invited in for testing.
- *Stopped opportunistic Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea testing for under 25's* – Walsall is now in the lowest 25% of authorities nationally in terms of detection rates for this age group.
- *Requirement for 30% of residents to move from face-to-face appointments to access via a digital method* - this has resulted in residents not accessing services until a late stage of illness, therefore requiring more complex treatment. Nationally there has been a reversal in this model, with the preference now being a face-to-face appointment, to reduce late diagnosis and safeguarding concerns.

- 4.8. To support mitigation of the impacts above, the proposed sexual health redesign process has included use of non-recurrent funding of £75k for 2023/24 relating to the part year effect of rental costs for service sites in Walsall Town Centre. Alongside this, two sexual health outreach nurses are being employed directly by the Health Protection team within Public Health. The ongoing cost of this development, and the posts, will be funded through optimisation and prioritisation of the Public Health grant.
- 4.9. Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust has also received a direct award of funding from NHS England, for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)³. This is a Department of Health of grant and allows access to deliver the required treatment to support the prevention of HIV. All prescribed medication costs are directly funded by NHSE. There was an increase in this funding from £24k in 2021 to, circa £34k in 2022. From 2023, this funding was added to the baseline of the public health grant. It is recognised the funding provided for the borough was not sufficient. Therefore, Public Health are required to provide additional funding of £20k per annum to ensure equity of access within the borough. This has been found non-recurrently for 2023/24 and 2024/25. If further funding is required beyond this, this will be considered as part of usual Public Health grant prioritisation and budget setting processes.
- 4.10. Public Health have also identified £35k non-recurrent funding for a psycho-sexual Counsellor. They will help promote and develop positive psychological sexual health for residents, especially around PrEP. The model of delivery incorporates a holistic approach to increase understanding, knowledge, and well-being including education to develop skills that encourage positive choice. This has been found

³ [Reimbursement for the use of generic and second line drugs for Pre Exposure Prophylaxis \(PrEP\) for the prevention of HIV \(2112\) \[230402P\] \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)

non-recurrently for 2023/24 and 2024/25. If further funding is required beyond this, this will be considered as part of usual Public Health grant prioritisation and budget setting processes.

Delivery of Service

- 4.11. Following a review of the geographical requirements for service delivery and the availability of suitable medical consulting rooms, it is proposed that the of integrated sexual and reproductive health services will be delivered from suitably located medical centres within the borough. Terms have been agreed for the use of four consulting rooms within the new Hatherton Medical Centre on Hatherton Road under a licence agreement. The licence allows the use of the fully equipped consulting rooms and ancillary accommodation within the centre and reception facilities. The licence fee is payable on a daily rate and is estimated to be approximately £101,550 per annum. The licence can be terminated by either party on giving 6 months' written notice. The licence fee is subject to annual review by agreement subject to a maximum increase equivalent to the Retail Prices Index. As this sum exceeds the threshold of £50,000 per annum, Cabinet approval is required to enter into the licence agreement. This will be paid for through the Public Health grant, and is designed to improve access to local services, to ultimately reduce costs to the council for Walsall residents attending services outside of the borough.
- 4.12. The additional investments outlined above will be reviewed in the light of a wider process that will be undertaken with Walsall Healthcare Trust to look at overall resource available for sexual health. Please also note that GP contraceptive services are commissioned separately to the main sexual health contract.

Overview of Healthy Child Programme 0-19

Service description: Healthy Child Programme 0 – 19

- 4.13. The Healthy Child Programme 0-19 (HCP 0-19) is a universal service which supports children and young people, parents and people working with children and young people, by offering evidence-based interventions consisting of child screening tests, developmental reviews and information and guidance to support parenting and healthy choices for their children's optimum health and wellbeing. It also provides our teenage pregnancy prevention and support service.
- 4.14. The service aims to:
- help parents, carers or guardians develop and sustain a strong bond with children
 - support parents, carers or guardians in keeping children healthy and safe and reaching their full potential
 - protect children from serious disease, through screening and immunisation

- reduce childhood obesity by promoting healthy eating and physical activity
- support resilience and positive maternal and family mental health
- support the development of healthy relationships and good sexual and reproductive health
- identify health and wellbeing issues early, so support and early intervention can be provided in a timely manner
- make sure children are prepared for and supported in all childcare, early years and education settings and are supported to be 'ready to learn at 2 and ready for school by 5'
- reduce teenage conceptions and ensure teen parents receive the support needed, e.g. links into education and employment and parenting support

Developments since the last Cabinet report

- 4.15. Following the decision to introduce a S75 agreement, and the need to reprioritise the Healthy Child Programme 0-5 Service, fortnightly meetings have been held between commissioners and the provider to return to full service delivery.
- 4.16. Performance has improved with the following achievements (up to end of Aug 2023):
- Reporting service prioritisation plans to Walsall Safeguarding Partnership (WSP). Assurance gained at WSP Safeguarding Executive and Performance, Quality and Assurance Groups
 - Delivery of 97.3% newborn checks (home based) – with full account for the 2.7% not seen due to babies being still in hospital in a neonatal or other inpatient facility.
 - Universal 6-8 week checks reinstated seeing 67.25% of children on the universal pathway. This is an increase from 49.48% in Quarter 4. Work is underway to understand the low uptake of checks and set measures in place to increase this.
 - Restart of universal 9-12 month reviews, seeing 78.71% of children.
 - Closer scrutiny and auditing of pathways and activity and parent engagement.
 - A Single Point of access set in place which in Quarter 1 2023/24 had 3038 calls with 49% of calls from parents seeking support.
 - Regular sharing of high-level finance and spend, and formal agreement to joint meetings between finance and commissioner teams across Walsall Council and WHT.
 - Recruitment of new staff to support new services, increased staffing skill mix and constant attention to maintaining staff complement.

Challenges

- 4.17. National shortage of qualified health visitors has led to difficulties with recruitment.

- 4.18. Reliance on Bank staff. While achievement of 97.3% of New Birth Visits is very positive, this has only been possible by recruiting temporary bank staff (55% of activity).
- 4.19. Caseload: The Institute of Health Visiting recommends that the optimum maximum caseload for effective practice is 250 children, and lower in areas of high vulnerability. The caseload in Walsall is over 500 per Health Visitor.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.20. All Council Plan priorities continue to be supported by extending the contractual arrangement, while supporting the teams to deliver an Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health service and Healthy Child Programme, that reduce inequalities and make the most of potential by;
- Supporting our residents to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing
 - Ensuring that these Council commissioned services are customer focused, effective, efficient and fair
 - Ensuring children have the best start in life, are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well

Walsall Children and Young People's Alliance

- 4.21. The Children and Young people's partnership has 4 broad objectives supported by the Healthy Child programme that children will be:
- Safe and supported
 - Healthy and Well
 - Aspiring and Attaining
 - Able to make a successful transition to adulthood

Walsall Health and Wellbeing Board

- 4.22. The Walsall Health and Wellbeing Board has set the below three priorities for 2022 to 2025, with the Healthy Child Programme 0 - 19 being integral to supporting the health and wellbeing of children and young people as well as contributing to the promotion of mental wellbeing.
- Mental wellbeing
 - Children and Young People
 - Our Digital Approach – infrastructure and inclusion

Risk management

- 4.23. The approval of the full 24-month extension will enable continuity of service provision. It will help to retain experienced staff and enable longer term planning

for future provision.

- 4.24. If the extension period is not approved then alternative provision will need to be put in place, as these are prescribed functions for local authorities under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.
- 4.25. Throughout the extension period, the contract will continue to be robustly contract managed to ensure that performance, quality, and value for money is being achieved for the Council.

Financial implications

- 4.26. The cost of the 24-month extension proposed will be funded from existing budgets of £1.80m annually for Sexual Health services, £5.14m annually for 0-19 Healthy Child Programme, and £101,500 annually for the license fee for the Hatherton Medical Centre (for sexual health services).
- 4.27. It is worth noting that the Sexual Health service budget has been reduced by 32% since 2015 and the 0-19 Healthy Child programme by 14%, linked with grant reductions and required Cabinet savings processes. In addition, the contracts for Family Nurse Partnership and Breastfeeding support previously held with Walsall Healthcare Trust were decommissioned and the work subsumed into the 0-19 service. These efficiencies were made prior to the agreement of the funding outlined below for each service in paragraphs 4.28 and 4.29 respectively.
- 4.28. In addition to the core budgets for sexual health services, there is currently non-recurrent funding of £55k identified from the Public Health grant reserve until the end of 2024/25 for sexual health services. If further funding is required beyond 2024/25 for these initiatives, this will, in the first instance, look to be identified from within future Public Health grant allocations. 75k has also been found non-recurrently for rental costs for a sexual health service site in Walsall Town Centre for 2023/24. Further funding for this has been found within the public health grant, with licence fee costs of £101,500 per annum. Two sexual health outreach nurses are also in the process of being employed through the Public Health team, to support access for vulnerable communities.
- 4.29. In addition to the core budget for the 0-19 programme, in 2023/24, a 5% budget uplift and £34k recurrently for a post to increase uptake of childhood immunisations has been granted for the Healthy Child Programme given assurance gained on service recovery, sharing of standard operating procedures and open book accounting.
- 4.30. Further cost pressures linked to reagents used for online STI testing and inflationary pressures on the 0-19 Healthy Child programme are currently subject to consideration as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process, including as part of

the iterative prioritisation process that is undertaken linked with use of the existing council's Public Health grant allocation of £19.32m.

Sexual Health services Budget – savings detail

4.31. Please see below for reductions to Sexual health service budgets linked to Cabinet savings and/or Public Health grant reductions

- 2015/16 - £350k reduction prior to contract award
- 2018/19 - £500k reduction

Total Sexual health budget reduction since 2015 = £850,000 (prior to agreement of non-recurrent funding outlined above, plus licence fee for Hatherton site)

Healthy Child Programme 0-5 Budget – savings detail

4.32. In 2015 £4,261,000 was received by Walsall Council from the Department of Health to fund a Healthy Child Programme 0-5, a figure which was below statistical neighbour allocations. The budget for the 5-19 programme moved to Walsall Council during the transition of Public Health from the NHS. Please see Cabinet savings made in below tables.

		Remaining
Budget 2015	£4,261,000	
2016 reduction	-£221,000	£4,040,000
2018 reduction	-£400,000	£3,640,000

Healthy Child Programme 5-19 Budget – savings detail

		Remaining
Budget 2013	£1,229,824	
2015 reduction	-£128,824	£1,101,000

Total Healthy Child Programme 0-19 budget reduction since 2015 = £749,824 (prior to agreement of 5% uplift in 2023/24 outlined above, plus immunisation post)

Legal implications

- 4.32. The Council has an obligation to provide a number of health service functions set out in section 2B of the NHS Act 2006 and the Local Authorities (Public Health functions and Entry to Premises by Local Healthwatch Representatives) Regulations 2013.
- 4.33. Local Authorities have been statutorily responsible for commissioning and delivering public services for sexual and reproductive health and Healthy Child Programme since 1 April 2013.

- 4.34. A Section 75 agreement is a legal agreement between a local authority and an NHS body under section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 (updated under the Health and Social Care Act 2012).
- 4.35. A Section 75 enables local authorities and NHS organisations to enter into arrangements in relation to the exercise of each other's health-related functions where such arrangements will provide a more streamlined service if they are likely to lead to an improvement in the way those functions are exercised.
- 4.36. The Section 75 agreement includes:
- clearly defined shared performance measures
 - outcomes, aims and objectives
 - setting out the services to be delivered
 - governance arrangements including accountability, financial reporting, management of risks
 - exit strategy
 - treatment of any overspends/under spends.

Procurement Implications / Social Value

- 4.33. The ongoing Section 75 agreement will continue to support Social Value. This will continue to be monitored through the partnership arrangements demonstrating how they offer Social Value in economic, environmental and/or social benefits to their employees and residents. The Council's Social Value Toolkit will be used as a guide and is monitored in regular commissioner/provider meetings.

Property implications

- 4.34. Terms have been agreed for the use of four consulting rooms within the new Hatherton Medical Centre on Hatherton Road under a licence agreement for the delivery of sexual health services. The licence allows the use of the fully equipped consulting rooms and ancillary accommodation within the centre and reception facilities. The licence fee is payable on a daily rate and is estimated to be approximately £101,550 per annum. The licence can be terminated by either party on giving 6 months' written notice. The licence fee is subject to annual review by agreement subject to a maximum increase equivalent to the Retail Prices Index. The licence agreement has been drafted by Legal Services.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.35. Continuing to commission these services under a compliant Section 75 commissioning route will enable the Council to promote health and wellbeing for Walsall residents and fully contribute to the Council's priorities impacting upon all residents across their life.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.36. This is a continuation of existing provision. Public health officers and the provider will continue to work in partnership to address any equality implications which arise out of in-contract changes to service delivery.
- 4.37. The service specifications also detail the requirement to undertake engagement work with target groups, the wider community and NHS services and organisations working with these populations. This will help to minimise barriers, improve engagement for people with more complex needs and actively tackle health and wellbeing inequalities.
- 4.38. The service specifications include a requirement to identify and provide services that meet any specific needs of protected groups as identified in analysis and to share data and actively participate in the evaluation of the services so that access and outcomes among protected groups can be monitored.
- 4.39. The Integrated Sexual Health service continues to provide an element of outreach service. This ensures vulnerable groups and those who find it hard to access care in the usual way are supported.
- 4.40. The Healthy Child Programme is a universal service. Additional interventions are provided for those families and communities where greatest need is identified.

Staffing implications

- 4.41. There are no staffing implications arising out of this report.

Climate Impact

- 4.42. The environmental impact of the proposed agreement is limited.

Consultation

- 4.43. Consultation has been completed with Finance, Legal, and Facilities, as well as Directorate senior leaders, and the Portfolio holder

5. Decide

- 5.1 Cabinet is requested to consider the proposal to extend the Section 75 agreement for the delivery of the Integrated Sexual Health contract for a period of 2 years from 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2026. As set out in the report and to agree the recommendations as outlined in section 3.
- 5.2 Cabinet is requested to consider the proposal to extend the Section 75 agreement for the delivery of Healthy Child Programme 0-19 services for a period of 24

months from 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2026, as set out in the report and to agree the recommendations as outlined in section 3.

- 5.3 Cabinet is requested to consider the proposal to take up a licence agreement for the use of consulting rooms in Hatherton Medical Centre for the delivery of sexual health services, and to agree the recommendations as outlined in section 3.

6. Respond

- 6.1. Subject to Cabinet approval of the recommendations, Public Health will work with corporate colleagues to:

- Complete formal arrangements for the extension of the S75 partnership arrangements for two years from 1st April 2024.
- Move forward with opening of sexual health services at the Hatherton Medical Centre site

7. Review

Once the Council has entered into a longer term S75 partnership agreement with Walsall Healthcare Trust, the arrangements will continue to be regularly reviewed in relation to key performance indicators and quality and finance review processes as per the schedule set out by the partnership through Walsall Together.

Appendices

None

Background papers

None

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10 October 2023



Councillor Flint
Portfolio holder for Wellbeing, Leisure
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10 October 2023

Cabinet – 18 October 2023

Winter Service Operational Plan 2023 – 2028

Portfolio: Councillor K. Murphy – Street Pride

Related portfolios:

Service: Winter Service - Highways, Transport & Operations

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1. The council has a statutory obligation to maintain the highway in a safe condition. This includes the provision of winter maintenance to provide a safe environment in which road users can navigate the road network efficiently and effectively.

2. Summary

- 2.1. The council has a statutory duty to develop and implement a winter service operational plan to ensure so far as reasonably practicable, that traffic keeps moving even in unforeseen weather conditions and that safe passage is not endangered by snow and ice.
- 2.2. The plan covers approximately 40% of the highway network as given the scale of financial and other resources involved in delivering the winter service, it is not reasonable or practicable to:
 - provide the service on all sections of the public highway; and
 - ensure running surfaces are free from ice and snow at all times even on the treated parts of the public highway.
- 2.3. This report details the arrangements to be put into place to discharge the statutory duty.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That Cabinet approves the Winter Service Operational Plan 2023 – 2028 attached as **Appendix A**.

- 3.2. That the Executive Director, Economy, Environment & Communities in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Street Pride, be authorised to make minor amendments to the Winter Service Operational Plan, as necessary, to ensure the ongoing efficient and effective delivery of the winter service.

4. Report detail – know

Context

- 4.1. The Winter Service Operational Plan 2023 / 2028 details arrangements for the precautionary treatment of roads and pavements prior to ice formation and the clearance of snow.
- 4.2. The plan sets out the council policy, route planning strategy, the use of weather forecasting, personnel, plant and vehicles, communications, salt supply and distribution, performance monitoring, comprehensive details of salting routes, position of salt bins, record keeping and the decision making process which determines the need for precautionary salting to take place.
- 4.3. The core winter service is delivered during the period 1 November – 31 March. However, the Council has contingency arrangements in place for the delivery of a winter service response during the period 1 October – 30 April should unusual weather conditions dictate a response.
- 4.4. During extreme weather conditions there may be a necessity to concentrate winter service treatment onto the resilient network routes (RNR) only. The RNR comprises routes that are considered essential for economic activity and for key services such as maintaining power supplies and emergency health care.
- 4.5. The RNR will be given priority during extreme weather conditions and situations where staff resource, salt stocks, plant and fuel is in short supply. Because of the significance of activating the RNR, this is undertaken in consultation with the council's Resilience Team and will be prioritised over and above the delivery of any other route treatment.
- 4.6. Given the importance of the winter service in maintaining accessibility to schools, the provision of salt bins has again been offered. However, this remains on a chargeable basis to the individual school given the existing winter service budget is insufficient to meet this cost.
- 4.7. Maintaining the waste collection service during periods of snow and ice is important. When resources are available upon completion of the defined winter service route treatments, they will be directed to waste collection route treatments not covered under the defined highway treatment routes.
- 4.8. Winter season preparations are ongoing and, as required by the Department for Transport, suitable salt stock levels are available for the winter season. Regional salt sharing arrangements are also in place should there be a need due to unusually adverse weather conditions.

- 4.9. General advice on preparedness for winter is cascaded to the general public during October and throughout the winter service period, with Walsall specific information and national guidance produced by the Department for Transport being provided.
- 4.10. All winter service staff are fully briefed on the plan in advance of the winter season. Plant and machinery associated with the delivery of the winter service is fully calibrated and tested ready for the start of the core winter season period beginning 1 November.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.11 Economic growth for all people, communities and businesses is supported by the delivery of an appropriate winter service plan that ensures the safe and efficient movement of people and vehicles during periods of poor weather.
- 4.11. Delivery of the winter service through the Highways Infrastructure Services Contract ensures its efficiency and value for money.

Risk management

- 4.12. Well Managed Highway Infrastructure, industry guidance published in October 2018, emphasises the importance of adopting a risk-based approach for selecting winter service routes. It sets out the need for local highway authorities to prioritise routes based on factors such as traffic volume, critical infrastructure, and weather conditions.
- 4.13. By analysing data and assessing the potential impact of adverse weather, councils can allocate resources more efficiently and ensure safer winter travel. This approach allows for a proactive response to winter challenges, reducing road closures, incidents, and maintenance costs while enhancing overall network reliability and performance.
- 4.14. The council must produce a plan for the delivery of its winter service and deliver against that plan as a first priority. Additional requests for winter service treatment can only be considered once the requirements of the approved plan have been delivered.
- 4.15. The most significant risk is that of a particularly harsh winter with prolonged periods of heavy snowfall. Under such circumstances the service will have to consider concentrating its winter service treatments to the resilience network routes only as the limited resources available will be unable to maintain ongoing wider winter service treatments.

Financial implications

- 4.16. The winter service revenue budget allocation for the 2023 / 2024 season is £341k. Additional resources in excess of the existing budget may be required should a particularly harsh winter with periods of heavy snowfall prevail. Under such circumstances, a decision will be made by the service director, in consultation with the portfolio holder and director of finance, about continued

service delivery. Any spend above allocated budget will be contained within the Highways & Transportation cash limit. However, this has not been the case in the last 5 years where spend has been within the allocated budget for Winter Service.

Legal implications

4.17. Section 41(1) and (1A) of the Highways Act 1980 impose a statutory duty to maintain highways which are maintainable at public expense:

- The authority who are for the time being the highway authority for a highway maintainable at the public expense are under a duty to maintain the highway.
- In particular, a highway authority is under a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.

4.18. The case of *Goodes v East Sussex CC* [\[2000\] All ER \(D\) 808](#) confirmed that a highway authority's duty under [section 41\(1\)](#) of the Highways Act 1980 to "maintain the highway" was an absolute duty to keep the fabric of the highway in such good repair as to render its physical condition safe for ordinary traffic to pass at all seasons of the year. However, it did not include a duty to prevent the formation of ice or remove the accumulation of snow on the road.

4.19. Section 16 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 imposes a statutory duty to manage the local road network in order to keep traffic moving:

(1) It is the duty of a local traffic authority to manage their road network with a view to achieving, so far as may be reasonably practicable having regard to their other obligations, policies and objectives, the following objectives:

- (a) Securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network; and
- (b) Facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority.

(2) The action which the authority may take in performing that duty includes, in particular, any action which they consider will contribute to securing:

- (a) The more efficient use of their road network; or
- (b) The avoidance, elimination or reduction of road congestion or other disruption to the movement of traffic on their road network or a road network for which another authority is the traffic authority;

and may involve the exercise of any power to regulate or co-ordinate the uses made of any road (or part of a road) in the road network (whether or not the power was conferred on them in their capacity as a traffic authority).

4.20. Given the extent of the statutory obligations, consideration of case law and the scale of financial and other resources involved in delivering the winter service, it is not reasonable either to:

- Provide the service on all parts of the network.
- Ensure running surfaces are kept free of ice or snow at all times, even on the treated parts of the network.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

4.21. The winter service is delivered through the Highways Infrastructure Services Contract, approved by Cabinet 12 December 2018 and awarded to Tarmac Trading Limited. The award followed a thorough evaluation of price, quality and social value aspects.

Property implications

4.22. The winter service is delivered from the highways maintenance depot in Apex Road Brownhills.

Health and wellbeing implications

4.23. Delivery of a suitable winter service will assist with maintaining accessibility to health facilities for residents of Walsall. Given the constraints associated with the treatment of the public highway within a reasonable timeframe, it is not possible to offer a routine ice and snow clearance service to a range of other parties. However, the winter service treatment routes are designed to ensure reasonable access is maintained to the Manor Hospital and other key facilities during periods of ice and snow. Where resources permit, requests for assistance with one off treatments that assist vulnerable people and those with specific needs are always consider.

Reducing Inequalities

4.24. The winter service will provide all citizens using the public highway during winter conditions, standards of service which will maintain the safe passage of vehicular and pedestrian traffic so far as is reasonably practicable.

4.25. A well-maintained highway network that includes appropriate winter service treatments plays a pivotal role in reducing inequalities by enhancing accessibility and connectivity. It supports equal opportunities for economic growth, social development, and improved quality of life. In remote or marginalized areas, a reliable highway network connects residents to essential services, education, healthcare, and employment opportunities in urban centres. This access enables people from all backgrounds to participate in the economy and access resources that otherwise may be out of reach.

Staffing implications

4.26. None as a result of this report

Climate Impact

- 4.27. Historically the winter service was delivered across 6 pre-defined treatment routes. Through the use of specialist salt spreading route optimisation techniques, the same roads can be treated but across 5 pre-defined routes. This has achieved an overall 5% reduction in fossil fuel used by the gritters and associated carbon emissions.
- 4.28. Looking to the future, climate change is set to have significant implications for the maintenance and operation of public roads during the UK's winter season. Rising temperatures and altered precipitation patterns may lead to milder winters, reducing the frequency of snow and ice events. While this might seem positive, it presents challenges as road infrastructure is primarily designed for colder conditions. More erratic weather could increase the unpredictability of road conditions, demanding flexible maintenance strategies. Additionally, increased rainfall may lead to more frequent flooding events placing an alternative pressure on service delivery and network operation.

Consultation

- 4.29. The winter service plan has been developed in consultation with neighbouring authorities and Transport for West Midlands to ensure wherever possible a consistent winter service is delivered across the region.

5. Decide

- 5.1. The council has to determine what level of winter service provision is reasonable and practicable to deliver.
- 5.2. The council could expand the service to incorporate a greater proportion of the network. This would come at a greater revenue cost and would need to take account of the impact on current routes i.e. if more roads were added it would be necessary to re-introduce a sixth route and the staff, fleet and salt needed to service that route. In recent years, both complaints and claims in respect to winter service have remained low. On that basis, this is no significant requirement to expand the scope of the service.
- 5.3. The council could reduce the scope of the winter maintenance service however this would only deliver significant savings if an entire route could be removed from the gritting schedule. Moreover, the current routes have been designed to encompass the most important sections of the road network ensure access to key infrastructure is maintained whenever it is reasonably practicable to do so. Based on the expectation that the authority will take a risk based approach, reducing the current services is not recommended due to the implications for essential network operation.
- 5.4. The proposed level of service, set out in the winter service plan, places a focus on delivering winter service treatments to 218 miles of the public highway within Walsall, deemed to be the highest priority in respect to providing a safe

environment in which road users can navigate the road network efficiently and effectively.

6. Respond

6.1. Subject to Cabinet approval, the winter service plan will:

- Provide precautionary salting and snow clearance to 218 miles of the public highway
- Undertake snow clearance in the town and district centres
- Provide roadside salt bins for self help
- Provide regular public updates in relation to road conditions and winter service treatments
- Assist with maintaining access to schools, bus and waste collection routes

7. Review

7.1. The winter service operational plan will require periodic review as work is ongoing with Transport for West Midlands to ensure that where possible, a consistent level of winter service is maintained across the wider Combined Authority Area, particularly in relation to the Key Route Network.

Appendices

Appendix A Winter Service Operational Plan 2023 - 2028

Background papers

None

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Signed



Signed



Kathryn Moreton
Interim Director

Councillor Murphy
Portfolio holder – Street Pride

6 October 2023

6 October 2023



Appendix A

Winter Service Operational Plan 2023 - 2028

October 2023

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INTRODUCTION

This document explains the Council's statutory responsibilities and operational procedures in respect of the management and maintenance of public highways within the borough during the winter period.

Under section 41(1) of the Highways Act 1980, the Council has a statutory duty to maintain public highways. The Council also has a duty under section 41(1) A of the Highways Act 1980 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.

Section 16(1) of The Traffic Management Act 2004 (England) requires authorities to do all that is reasonably practicable to manage the network effectively to keep traffic moving.

The Purpose of the Plan:

The Winter Service Plan establishes and implements contingency plans for dealing promptly and effectively with unforeseen weather conditions which impact on the public highway network within the borough.

The Winter Service Plan seeks to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, that traffic on the public highway network keeps moving even in unforeseen weather conditions during the winter period and its safe passage is not endangered by snow and ice. The plan details arrangements in place to ensure that the council's statutory duties in respect of the management and maintenance of the highway network is being discharged during the winter period.

The Scope of the Plan

The plan sets out the arrangements for: treatment routes, the use of weather forecasting, personnel, plant and vehicles, communications, salt supply and distribution, performance monitoring, comprehensive details of salting routes, position of salt bins, record keeping and the decision making process which determines when the winter service response is delivered.

The council will deliver the general winter service response as and when weather conditions dictate to five pre-salting/snow clearance routes and eight retail based locations used by significant numbers of pedestrians.

A limited winter service network known as the resilience network will be treated when extremes of weather or resource shortages require the available resources to be concentrated on maintaining the operation of a minimum transport network. This will be undertaken to support the delivery of key essential services whilst maintaining economic activity where possible.

Requests for a winter service response that fall outside of this plan will only be considered once the requirements of this plan have been delivered and then within the constraints of any available resources.

Legislative Context

Under section 41(1) of the Highways Act 1980 (the “HA 1980”) the Council as the Local Highway Authority is under a statutory duty *to maintain highways maintainable at public expense*.

Section 111 of the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003 amended section 41 (1) of the HA 1980 by the addition of section 41(A) which provides:

“In particular, a highway authority is under a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.

Section 150 of the Highways Act 1980 puts a responsibility on the highway authority to clear snow from the highway, but only if it is causing an obstruction.

Under Part 2 S16 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 (England) the Council as the Local Traffic Authority is under a statutory duty *to manage the local road network to keep traffic moving*.

The section states:

- (1) It is the duty of a local traffic authority to manage their road network with a view to achieving, so far as may be reasonably practicable having regard to their other obligations, policies and objectives, the following objectives:
 - (a) Securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network; and
 - (b) Facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority.
- (2) The action which the authority may take in performing that duty includes, in particular, any action which they consider will contribute to securing:
 - (a) The more efficient use of their road network; or
 - (b) The avoidance, elimination or reduction of road congestion or other disruption to the movement of traffic on their road network or a road network for which another authority is the traffic authority;

and may involve the exercise of any power to regulate or co-ordinate the uses made of any road (or part of a road) in the road network (whether or not the power was conferred on them in their capacity as a traffic authority).

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Guidance

In discharging the duties imposed, the Council has considered the recommendations contained within the National Winter Service Research Group practical guide for winter service, March 2019.

Given the scale of financial and other resources involved in delivering the Winter Service, it is therefore not reasonable either to:

- Provide the service on all parts of the network
- Ensure running surfaces are kept free of ice or snow at all times, even on the treated parts of the network

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Winter Service Resilience Standards

Overall winter period	1 st October to 30 th April
Core Winter Period	1 st November to 31 st March
Days Resilience (Overall Winter Period)	3 Days
Days Resilience (Core Winter Period)	6 Days

Minimum Salt Stocks
(assume 20g/m² spread rate)

	Normal treatment network (tonnes run)	Minimum Stock		
		Full Pre Season Stock (12days/48 runs)	Core Winter Period (6 days 24 runs)	Overall Winter Period (3 days 12 runs)
Carriageway	60	2880	1440	720
Total		2880 tonnes	1400 tonnes	720 tonnes

Council decision Makers	4
Contractor duty officers	5

Route treatment information

Resilience Network Route (RNR)

This route will be given priority during extreme weather conditions and situations where winter service operatives, salt stocks, plant and fuel for driving the plant is in short supply.

The primary purpose of this route treatment is to ensure a minimum transport network remains available to support the delivery of key essential services whilst maintaining economic activity where possible.

Because of the significance of activating the RNR, this will be undertaken in consultation with the council's Resilience team ensuring a joined up approach with Public Health to minimise the impact on vulnerable people.

The route will encompass the vast majority of the boroughs A road network and incorporates access to strategic medical facilities, Gas, Electricity, Water and Communications infrastructure. However, minor variations will exist as a direct consequence of practical issues associated with providing suitable turning facilities for the gritter fleet when road conditions are so extreme that the resilience network treatment has been triggered.

General precautionary salting & snow routes

351Km (218miles) of Walsall's highways will be subject to general precautionary salting and snow clearance out of a total length of highway within the Borough of approximately 856Km (532miles).

There are five general precautionary salting / snow clearance routes:

All routes comprise roads on the primary network and other roads carrying substantial volumes of traffic together with some roads with high risk of early ice formation. The routes include a number of established bus routes in residential areas, important industrial estate roads and road used by heavy commuter traffic at peak periods.

Footways are not routinely treated. However, during periods of snow fall and lying snow, resource is deployed to move snow from footways in eight retail based locations used by significant numbers of pedestrians.

General residential estate roads, Public Rights of Way and car parks are not routinely treated.

Coordination with the Council's Resilience team is an integral part of the delivery of the winter service response, with a strategic overview undertaken throughout the season.

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Schools

Given the importance of the winter service in maintaining accessibility to schools, the provision of salt bins is offered to all schools within the borough on a cost recovery basis.

Waste collection routes

During snow fall and following the gritting of all scheduled routes, should resources be available they will be deployed to treat waste collection routes that are due for collection the following day.

Response times

All winter service personnel and plant are available on stand-by throughout the core winter period 1 November to 31 March.

- Completion of mobilisation following notification by the Decision Maker: 1 Hour
- Completion of route treatment following mobilisation: 4 Hours

Salt

Salt is stored in a purpose built salt barn at Apex Road Depot and used on a last in first out basis. To ensure appropriate spread rates continue to be applied to the road network, testing for particle size is undertaken by a United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) accredited laboratory and localised testing of moisture content is undertaken throughout the winter season. Loading is by mechanical shovel which includes a weighing mechanism.

Salt stock will be managed in accordance with the resilience standards identified in this plan.

The Council will routinely notify the Department for Transport (DfT) of its salt stock levels. At times of national salt shortage, the DfT will direct the distribution of salt stocks to regions of the country in most need.

Spread Rates

When undertaking precautionary salting for ice or treatment for snow, salt will be applied to all roads detailed in the operational plan at the spread rates determined by the decision maker.

During prolonged periods of snow it will be necessary to plough continuously from the onset to prevent build-up and compaction by traffic. Such ploughing should be combined with simultaneous salting as directed by the decision maker. However, once snow depths of 100mm have been reached, or when tackling snowdrifts, or when vehicles are operating on gradients, ploughing without salting may be permitted to allow the weight of the salt load to aid vehicle traction.

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Personnel

Staff Rotas

The council maintains rotas of staff on call outside normal office hours. Robust arrangements are in place to supply staff resource when necessary. Contact will be by telephone (landline or mobile) plus email.

Single/Double Manning Routes

All salt spreading vehicles are single manned except when heavy snowfall occurs.

Safe Working Practices

All operations will comply with relevant codes of practice and Health and Safety Executive regulations including the working time directives.

Training Arrangements

The Council's highways maintenance contractor will ensure that all employees who drive winter maintenance vehicles hold the City and Guilds Winter Maintenance Operator's Certificate.

Further training is made available from time to time usually arising from service, legislative or operational procedure changes.

Operation Snowfall

A training exercise for all winter service personnel is held prior to the start of the overall winter period. This exercise is used to demonstrate the treatment routes are still suitable for the gritter fleet to travel along and all plant, machinery and personnel are in a state of readiness for the winter season.

PLANT AND VEHICLES

Fleet Inventory (Summary)

2	No	18 tonne permanently bodied gritter lorries
3	No	fast swap demountable bodies
2	No	Hand spreaders

Fuel is stored at the Apex Road Depot but may also be obtained from commercial

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suppliers if necessary.

Weather Forecasts

Detailed weather forecast information is provided by the Councils service provider MetDesk. Detailed forecast information is made available to the decision maker to assist with determining the appropriate winter service response.

The decision maker will be available 24 hours per day to receive forecasts and to consult with the meteorological consultant.

In normal circumstances, the following forecasts will be received, monitored and acted upon, as appropriate, by the decision maker:

No	TARGET TIMES	INFORMATION
1	0730 hours	Morning summary
2	1230 hours	24 hour and 2 - 5 day text forecast for the West Midlands
3	1630 hours	Site specific temperature and dew point forecast graphs & text forecasts with probability
4	2130 hours	Evening summary

- Any dramatic changes, for example, snow or wash-off, is reported to the decision maker immediately, at whatever time this occurs.
- Significant weather changes will be notified to the decision maker via mobile telephones

Significant weather changes are defined as:

- i. When the road surface minimum temperature is between plus 5 degrees Celsius and minus 5 degrees Celsius, a temperature difference of more than 2 degrees Celsius is sustained for more than one hour between the forecast temperature curve and the actual temperature curve;
- ii. When there is a change of road frost status (from non-forecast to forecast or vice versa);
- iii. When there is a change of snow status (from non-forecast to forecast or vice versa).

A network of "ICELERT" automatic sensors located within the borough and wider West

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Midlands region provide real time information to the decision maker to aid their decision making.

Resilience Network Route

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RESILIENCE NETWORK ROUTE

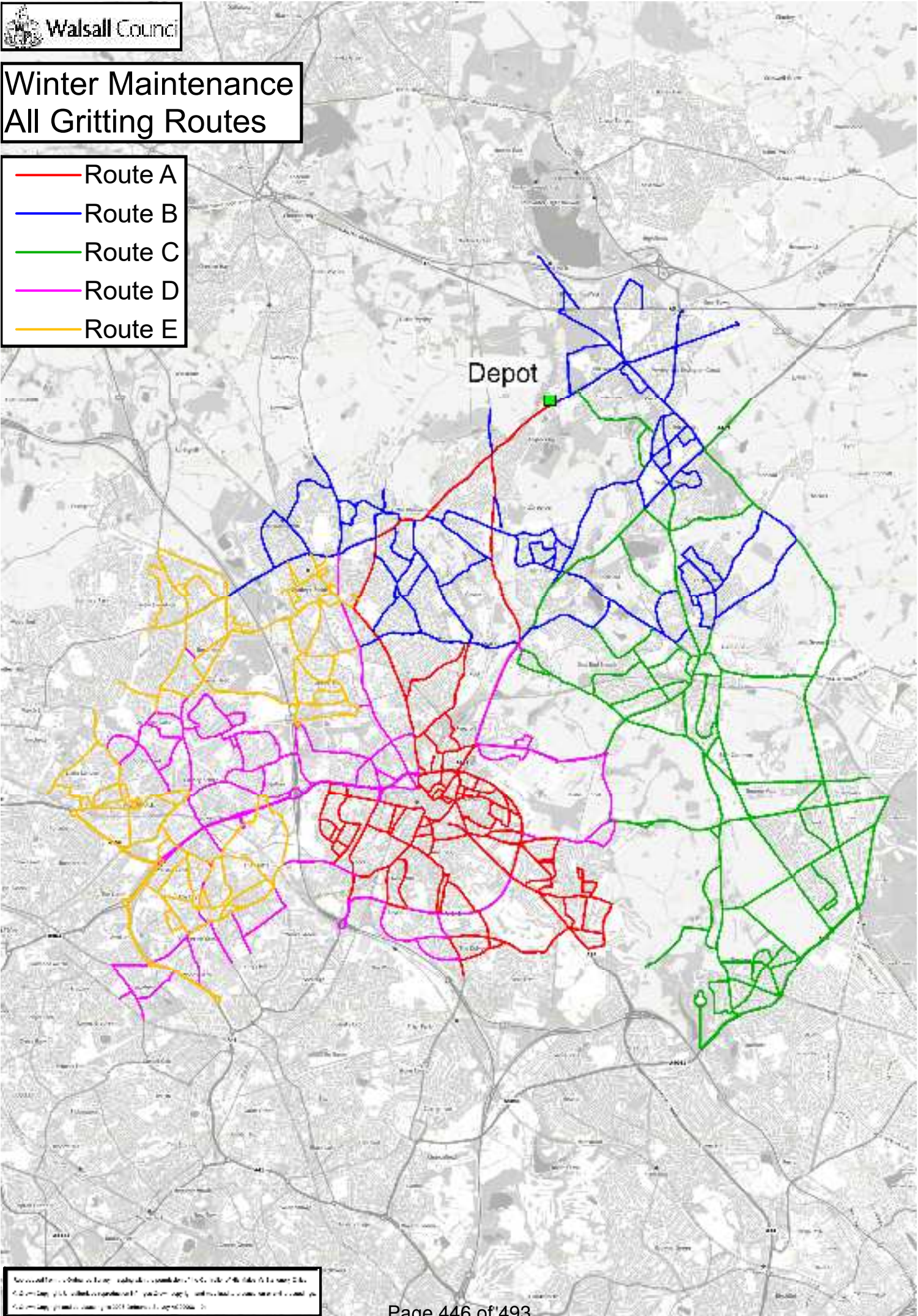


Precautionary Salting & Snow Routes

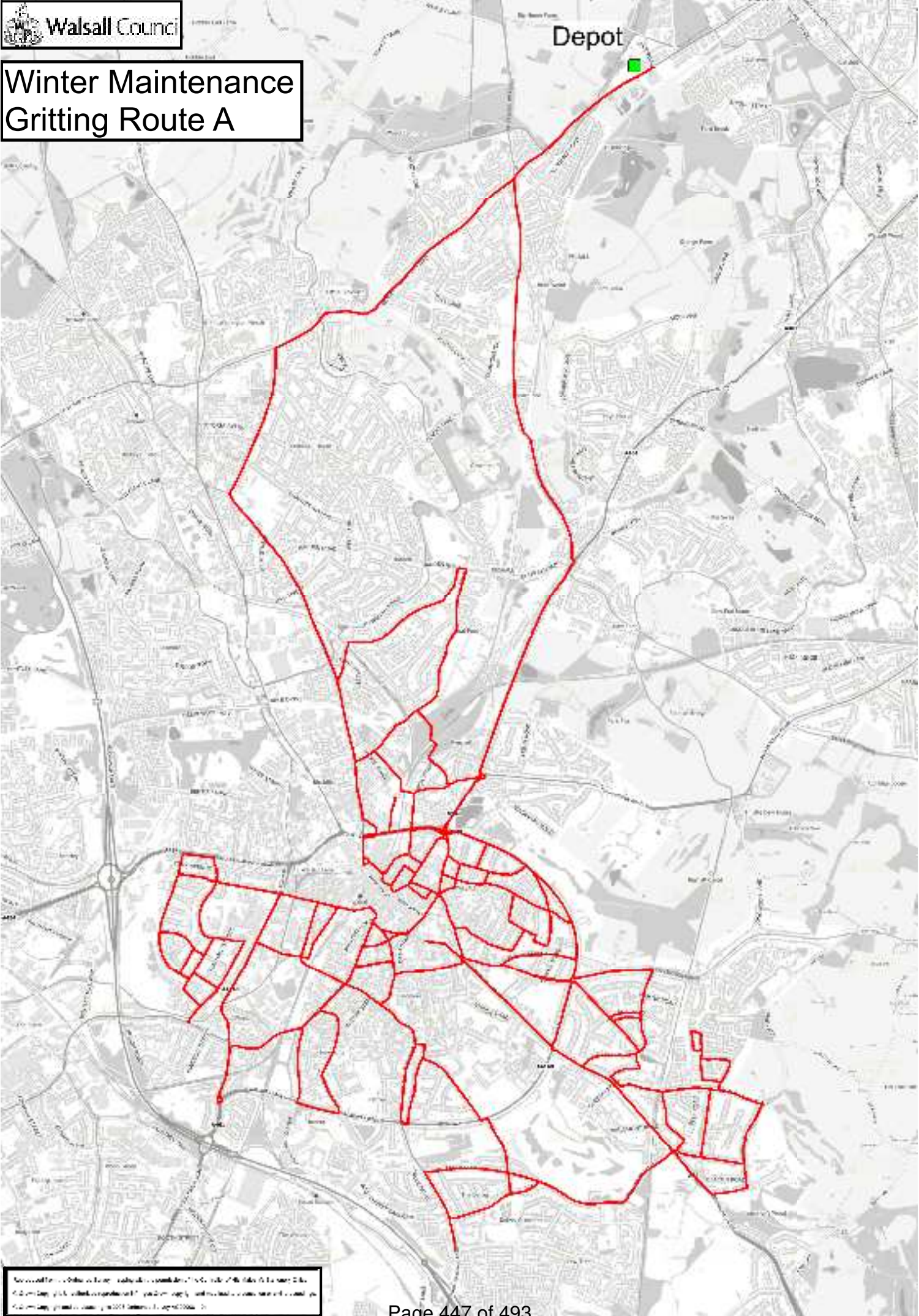
Routes 1 – 5

Winter Maintenance All Gritting Routes

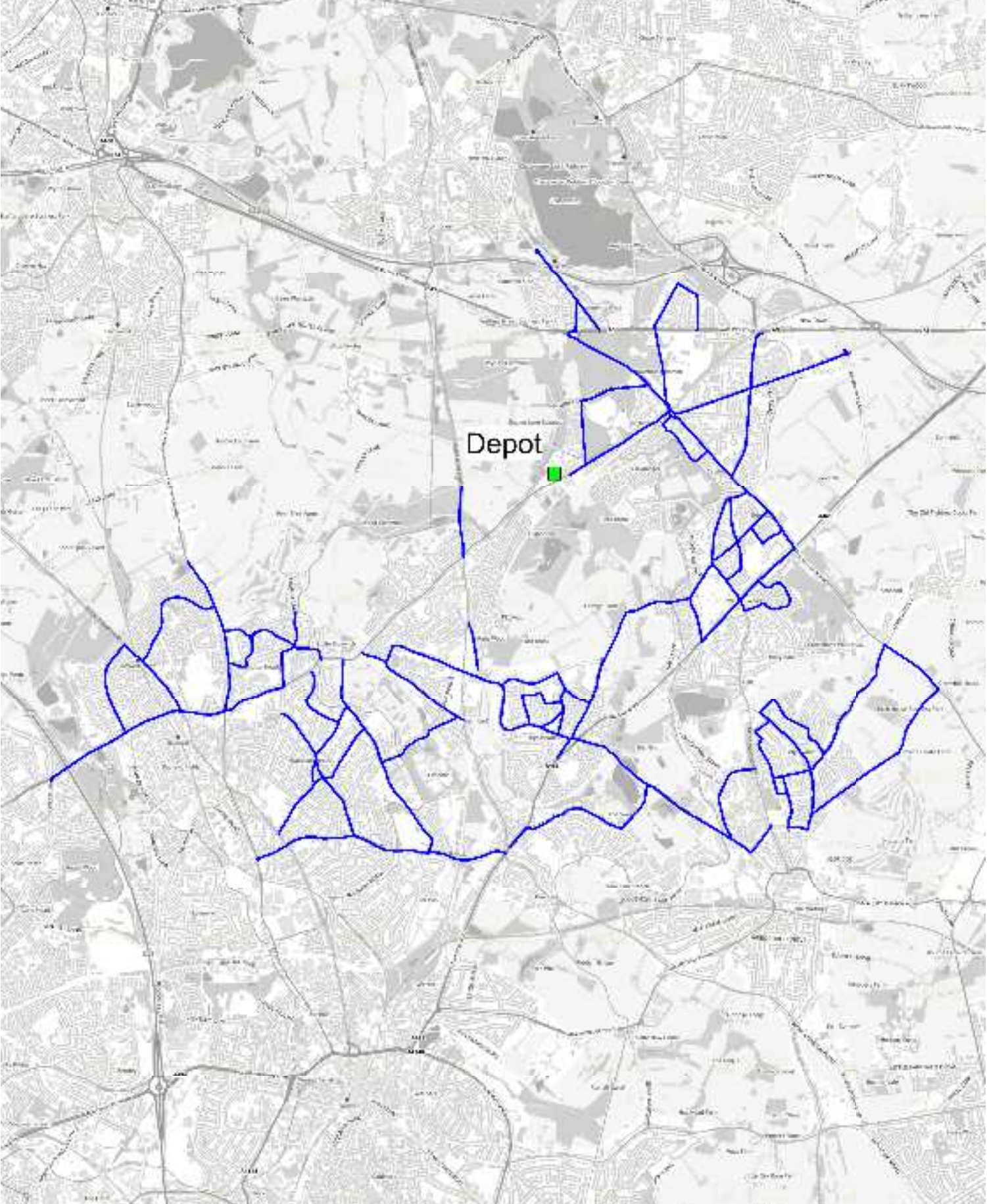
-  Route A
-  Route B
-  Route C
-  Route D
-  Route E



Winter Maintenance Gritting Route A



Winter Maintenance Gritting Route B



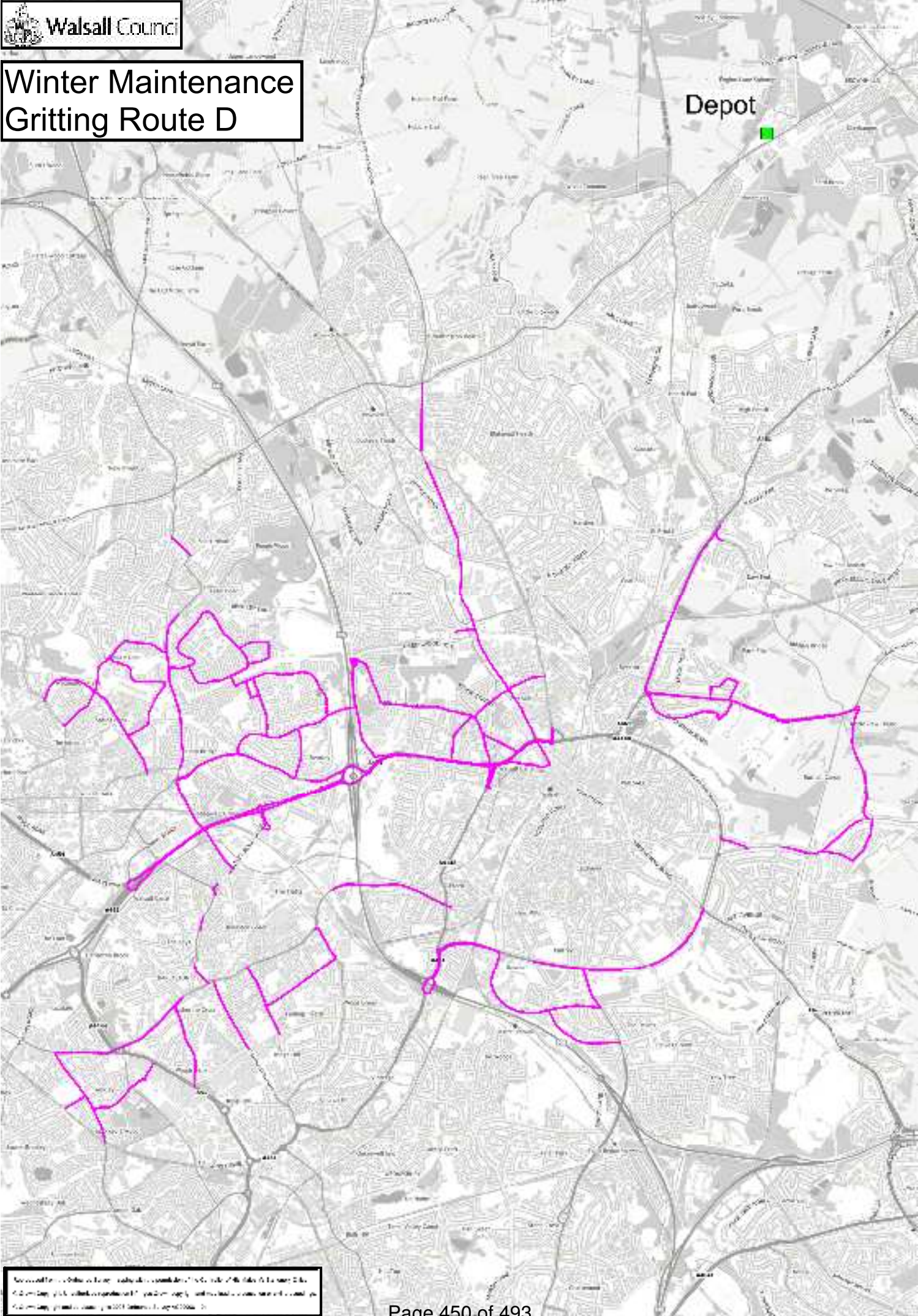
Approved for publication by the Council on 15/10/2014. This route is subject to change without notice. The Council is not responsible for any damage or loss of property caused by any vehicle using the route. © 2014 Walsall Council

Winter Maintenance Gritting Route C



For a full list of routes and their details, please refer to the full list of routes on the Council's website. This map is for information only and should not be used as a legal document. © Walsall Council 2014. All rights reserved.

Winter Maintenance Gritting Route D



Approved for use on the website by the Council on 15/01/2014. The route is subject to change without notice. The route is subject to change without notice. The route is subject to change without notice.

Winter Maintenance Gritting Route E

Depot



Walsall Council is not responsible for any loss or damage to property or personal injury caused by any vehicle or person using the road network. The Council is not responsible for any loss or damage to property or personal injury caused by any vehicle or person using the road network.

Town and District centres Footway Treatment Routes

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Walsall Town Centre – Hand Gritting

Footway gritting route No. 1

Road	Instruction / Direction
START GRITTING	
STAFFORD ST JUNCTIONION OF LITTLETON ST	PROCEED TO
TOWNEND SQUARE	TURN INTO
ST PAULS STREET TO HATHERTON ROAD	TURN LEFT
HATHERTON ROAD TO LICHFIELD ST	
STOP GRITTING	RETURN TO
HATHERTON STREET	
START GRITTING	
HATHERTON STREET TO LITTLETON ST	
LITTLETON STREET TO LOWER FORSTER ST	TURN RIGHT
LOWER FORSTER ST TO HATHERTON ROAD	TURN RIGHT
HATHERTON ROAD TO LICHFIELD ST	TURN LEFT
LICHFIELD ST TO JUNCTIONION OF BROADWAY	TURN LEFT
STOP GRITTING	
LICHFIELD ST JUNCTIONION HATHERTON ROAD	RETURN TO
START GRITTING	
LICHFIELD ST TO LEICESTER ST	PROCEED TO
LICHFIELD STREET	TURN RIGHT
DARWALL ST TO BRIDGE ST	TURN LEFT
DARWALL ST TO HATHERTON ST	TURN AROUND
DARWALL TO TOWER STREET	TURN AROUND
TOWER ST TO LICHFIELD ST	TURN LEFT

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<p>STOP GRITTING LICHFIELD ST JUNCTIONTION BRIDGE ST</p> <p>START GRITTING BRIDGE ST TO ST PAULS ST ST PAULS ST TO BUTLERS PASSAGE BUTLERS PASSAGE PARK ST WISEMORE MARSH ST TO STATION ST STATION ST TO PARK ST STATION ST TO BRIDGEMAN ST BRIDGEMAN ST TO BRADFORD PLACE BRADFORD PLACE TO BRADFORD ST BRADFORD ST TO VICARAGE PLACE</p> <p>STOP GRITTING BRADFORD ST JUNCTIONTION BRADFORD PLACE</p> <p>START GRITTING BRADFORD PLACE BRADFORD ST THE BRIDGE BRIDGE ST</p> <p>STOP GRITTING</p>	<p>PROCEED TO</p> <p>INTO TURN LEFT TURN RIGHT PROCEED TO TURN LEFT TURN LEFT TURN AROUND TURN LEFT TURN RIGHT TURN RIGHT TURN AROUND PROCEED TO</p> <p>PROCEED TO PROCEED TO PROCEED TO</p>
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Walsall Town Centre – Hand Gritting

Footway gritting route No. 2

Road	Instruction / Direction
<p>START GRITTING LOWER RUSHALL ST AT JUNCTIONTION OF BROADWAY LOWER RUSHALL ST TO WHITTIMERE ST WHITTIMERE ST TO INTOWN ROW GRIT ALL INTOWN ROW LOWER RUSHALL ST LOWER RUSHALL ST TO WAREWELL ST WAREWELL ST TO UNION ST UNION ST TO PADDOCK LANE PADDOCK LANE TO BALL ST BALL ST TO WAREWELL ST PADDOCK LANE PADDOCK LANE TO ABLEWELL ST ABLEWELL ST TO TANTARRA ST TANTARRA ST ABLEWELL ST ABLEWELL ST TO BOTT LANE BOTT LANE TO UNION ST UNION ST TO PADDOCK LANE</p> <p>STOP GRITTING PADDOCK LANE TO ABLEWELL ST</p> <p>START GRITTING</p>	<p>PROCEED ALONG</p> <p>TURN RIGHT</p> <p>RETURN TO TURN RIGHT TURN LEFT</p> <p>TURN RIGHT TURN RIGHT TURN RIGHT TURN AROUND, RETURN TO TURN RIGHT TURN RIGHT TURN LEFT TURN LEFT TURN LEFT TURN LEFT TURN LEFT TURN LEFT TURN LEFT TURN LEFT PROCEED ALONG TURN LEFT</p>

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<p>UPPER RUSHALL ST PEAL ST DUDLEY ST TO JUNCTIONTION OF UPPER HALL LANE UPPER HALL LANE TO CALDMORE ROAD CALDMORE ROAD TO DUDLEY ST STOP GRITTING CALDMORE ROAD JUNCTIONTION UPPER HALL ST START GRITTING CALDMORE RD JUNCTIONTION UPPER HALL LANE TO JUNCTIONTION LOWER HALL LANE LOWER HALL LANE TO END STOP GRITTING JUNCTIONTION NEWPORT ST START GRITTING NEWPORT ST TO LITTLE NEWPORT ST LITTLE NEWPORT ST TO END STOP GRITTING NEWPORT STREET START GRITTING NEWPORT ST TO BRADFORD ST STOP GRITTING BRADFORD ST JUNCTIONTION WITH CALDMORE ROAD START GRITTING CALDMORE ROAD TO BRADFORD LANE BRADFORD LANE TO VICARAGE PLACE VICARAGE PLACE TO MOUNTRATH ST MOUNTRATH ST TO CALDMORE ROAD CALDMORE TO VICARAGE PLACE VICARAGE PLACE TO JUNCTIONTION BRADFORD ST STOP GRITTING DUDLEY ST JUNCTIONTION GEORGE ST START GRITTING GEORGE ST TO HIGH ST HIGH ST TO GOODALL ST GOODALL ST TO BRIDGE ST STOP GRITTING GOODALL ST JUNCTIONTION FREER ST START GRITTING FREER ST TO UPPER BRIDGE ST UPPER BRIDGE ST TO LOWER RUSHALL ST STOP GRITTING</p>	<p>PROCEED TO PROCEED TO FOLLOW TURN LEFT RETURN TO PROCEED TO TURN RIGHT TURN AROUND AND PROCEED TO TURN RIGHT TURN LEFT TURN AROUND AND RETURN TO TURN LEFT TURN LEFT AND PROCEED TO TURN RIGHT TURN LEFT TURN LEFT TURN RIGHT TURN RIGHT TURN AROUND AND PROCEED TO TURN LEFT TURN RIGHT TURN LEFT TURN AROUND AND RETURN TO TURN RIGHT TURN RIGHT</p>
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Darlaston Town Centre – Hand Gritting

Footway gritting route No. 3

Road	Instruction / Direction
START GRITTING	
NEW STREET JUNCTIONION OF CHURCH STREET	PROCEED TO
JUNCTIONION OF ST LAWRENCE WAY	TURN LEFT TURN RIGHT
ST LAWRENCE WAY TO JUNCTIONION PINFOLD STREET	TURN AROUND
PINFOLD STREET TO END OF SHOPS	TURN LEFT
PINFOLD STREET TO KING STREET PRECINCT	TURN LEFT
KING STREET PRECINCT TO THE FOLD	TURN LEFT
THE FOLD	TURN RIGHT
KING STREET PRECINCT TO NEW STREET	TURN AROUND
VICTORIA ROAD TO SLATER STREET	TURN LEFT
RETURN TO JUNCTIONION OF CRESCENT ROAD AND VICTORIA ROAD	TURN RIGHT
CRESCENT ROAD TO PICTUREDROME WAY	
PICTUREDROME WAY TO INCLUDE ALLEY WAY	TURN RIGHT
FROM PICTUREDROME WAY TO KING	TURN LEFT

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STREET PRECINCT CRESCENT ROAD TO WALSALL ROAD WALSALL ROAD TO END OF SHOPS STOP GRITTING	
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Willenhall Town Centre – Hand Gritting

Footway gritting route No. 4

Road	Instruction / Direction
START GRITTING	
WAKES GROUND CAR PARK	PROCEED TO
WALSALL ST TO JUNCTIONTION OF BATH ST	TO END AND RETURN
WALSALL STREET TO BILSTON ST	TURN LEFT
BILSTON STREET TO END OF SHOPS	RETURN
NEW ROAD TO END OF SHOPS	RETURN
BUS STOP AT END OF MARKET PLACE	TURN LEFT
MARKET PLACE TO JUNCTIONTION WOLVERHAMPTON STREET	TURN LEFT
WOLVERHAMPTON STREET TO JUNCTIONTION OF GOMER STREET	TURN RIGHT
GOMER ST TO HEALTH CENTRE	RETURN TO
STOP GRITTING	
JUNCTIONTION WOLVERHAMPTON STREET AND MARKET PLACE	TURN LEFT
START GRITTING	
STAFFORD STREET (TO INCLUDE ALL ALLEYWAYS) TO TEMPLE BAR ISLAND	RETURN TO
STOP GRITTING	
STAFFORD STREET TO JUNCTIONTION OF UNION STREET	TURN LEFT
START GRITTING	
UNION ST TO JUNCTIONTION OF LICHFIELD ST	TURN RIGHT
LICHFIELD ST TO JUNCTIONTION OF CLEMSON STREET	TURN LEFT
CLEMSON ST TO END	TURN LEFT, PROCEED TO
LOWER LICHFIELD ST	TURN RIGHT
LOWER LICHFIELD ST TO JUNCTIONTION LICHFIELD ST	TURN RIGHT
LICHFIELD ST TO ANGEL PASSAGE	TURN LEFT
ANGEL PASSAGE TO MARKET PLACE	TURN LEFT
MARKET PLACE TO PASSAGEWAY	TURN LEFT
PASSAGEWAY TO LICHFIELD ST	TURN LEFT
LICHFIELD ST TO CROSS ST	TURN LEFT
CROSS ST TO MARKET PLACE	RETURN TO
LICHFIELD ST	TURN RIGHT
LICHFIELD ST TO JUNCTIONTION OF	

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WALSALL ST STOP GRITTING	
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Bloxwich Town Centre – Hand Gritting

Footway gritting route No. 5

Road	Instruction / Direction
START GRITTING	
THE PINFOLD BY HEALTH CENTRE	PROCEED TO
HIGH STREET	TURN RIGHT AND PROCEED TO
ALONG HIGH STREET TO	
JUNCTIONION PARK ROAD	PROCEED ALONG
PARK ROAD TO JUNCTIONION TO	
JUNCTIONION CEMETERY WAY	TURN RIGHT
CEMETERY WAY TO END	RETURN TO
JUNCTIONION PARK ROAD	TURN RIGHT
PARK ROAD TO JUNCTIONION OF	TURN LEFT
LICHFIELD ROAD	
LICHFIELD ROAD TO JUNCTIONION	TURN LEFT
OF HIGH STREET	
HIGH STREET TO JUNCTIONION OF	TURN RIGHT
WOLVERHAMPTON ROAD	
WOLVERHAMPTON ROAD TO SAMUEL	TURN LEFT
ST	
SAMUEL ST TO JUNCTIONION HIGH	TURN RIGHT
STREET	
HIGH STREET TO JUNCTIONION	TURN INTO
MARKET PLACE	
MARKET SQUARE, GRIT MARKET	
SQUARE (INCLUDING WALK WAY TO	
ELMORE ROW CAR PARK)	TURN RIGHT INTO
ELMORE ROW	PROCEED TO
JUNCTIONION TO ELMORE GREEN	TURN LEFT
ELMORE GREEN TO JUNCTIONION	TURN AROUND PROCEED TO
HIGH STREET	
CHURCH MOAT WAY JUNCTIONION	
ELMORE GREEN	TURN RIGHT
CHURCH MOAT WAY TO	
JUNCTIONION ELMORE ROAD	TURN RIGHT
ELMORE ROW TO HIGH STREET	
STOP GRITTING	

Brownhills Town Centre – Hand Gritting

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Footway gritting route No. 6

Road	Instruction / Direction
START GRITTING	
SILVER STREET JUNCTION HIGH ST	PROCEED ALONG
SILVER STREET TO HIGH STREET	TURN LEFT
HIGH ST TO MARKET PLACE	TURN LEFT
MARKET PLACE	TURN LEFT
HIGH STREET TO RAVENSCROFT (TO INCLUDE ALL PASSAGEWAYS)	TURN INTO
RAVENSCROFT AND GRIT	RETUN TO
RAVENSCROFT INCLUDING STEPS TO CAR PARK	TURN LEFT
HIGH STREET	TURN AROUND
HIGH STREET TO ISLAND	TURN LEFT
HIGH STREET TO CHURCH ROAD	TURN LEFT
CHURCH ROAD TO SHORT STREET	TURN AROUND
SHORT STREET TO GREAT CHARLES STREET	TURN RIGHT
SHORT STREET TO BRICKLIN STREET	
BRICKLIN STREET TO HIGH STREET	
STOP GRITTING	

Aldridge Town Centre – Hand Gritting

Footway gritting route No. 7

Road	Instruction / Direction
START GRITTING	
ROOKERY LANE JUNCTIONION PORTLAND ROAD	PROCEED ALONG
PORTLAND ROAD TO LIBRARY	TURN RIGHT
LIBRARY TO MAGISTRATES COURT	TURN AROUND AND RETURN TO
ROOKERY LANE	TURN LEFT
ROOKERY LANE TO LITTLE ASTON ROAD	TURN LEFT
LITTLE ASTON ROAD TO ANCHOR ROAD	TURN LEFT
HIGH STREET TO END INCLUDING BAKERS LANE	
STOP GRITTING	TURN AROUND AND PROCEED TO
LEIGHSWOOD ROAD	
START GRITTING	
LEIGHSWOOD ROAD INFRONT OF SHOPS	TURN AROUND AND PROCEED TO

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JUNCTIONION OF ANCHOR ROAD BYPASS AND ANCHOR ROAD ANCHOR ROAD TO PORTLAND ROAD PORTLAND ROAD TO ROOKERY LANE STOP GRITTING	TURN RIGHT TURN LEFT
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Pelsall High Street – Hand Gritting

Footway gritting route No. 8

Road	Instruction / Direction
START GRITTING HIGH STREET JUNCTION CHAPEL STREET TO JUNCTIONION HIGHFIELD ROAD TO JUNCTIONION OLD TOWN LANE STOP GRITTING	PROCEED ALONG TURN LEFT

Salt Bins

Salt bins are provided for use on the public highway in locations not treated as part of the precautionary salting route treatment.

Salt bins are located in areas where residents can gain access to salt stocks for the treatment of their road and pavement. Salt bin stocks are not for use on private property.

Requests for salt bins will be assessed against the criteria detailed within this plan. Only those locations meeting the criteria will be considered for the placement of a salt bin.

Salt bins will be regularly monitored for stock levels and will be replenished as soon as practicable. However, priority will always be given to the precautionary treatment of the defined winter treatment network should there be a need to conserve resources. During any national salt shortage a mixture of salt/grit will be used for replenishment of salt bins due to the need to conserve salt for the strategic route network

For environmental reasons, salt stocks will only be deposited at the roadside in approved salt bins.

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LOCATION OF SALT BINS

Subject to in year variations

Aldridge Road, Streetly
Albion Road, Willenhall - side of number 48
Aldridge Road, Walsall – opposite airport entrance
Ambergate Close, Bloxwich - outside number 6
Aviemore Crescent, Pheasey outside number 33
Banks Street, Willenhall - junction Ames Street (End Of Belinda Close)
Bankside Crescent, Streetly junction Hundred Acre Road
Barcroft
Barr Common Close - on grass verge, Aldridge
Barr Common Road junction of Longwood Road Aldridge opposite number 42
Beacon Hill, Streetly - opposite Chevrons on verge
Beacon Rd, Pheasey - on verge in service road junction Hillingford Rd
Beacon Road, Pheasey - opposite Bridle Lane, in bus layby
Beatrice Street, Bloxwich - junction Green Lane
Beaufort Way, Aldridge
Beechcroft Crescent adjacent to number 49
Beechcroft Crescent opposite number 3
Beechdale Library
Beechy Close, Pheasey - outside number 1
Belvedere Road, Walsall - opposite number 2
Bentley Drive outside number 68 - junction Edward street and Bentley New Lane
Bentley Place – outside number 10 Bentley Drive
Berryfields junction Linley Wood Road, Aldridge
Bescot Crescent - opposite number 1, Walsall - junction Wednesbury Road
Bilston Street, Willenhall - on bridge before Rosehill Gardens outside LP14
Birmingham Rd , Walsall - opposite Merrions Close (on footway)
Birmingham Road, Walsall - opposite Skip Lane (on footway)
Blackwood Avenue outside number 5
Blakemore Road, Walsall Wood - junction Druids Walk
Blithfield Road
Bloxwich Library
Bloxwich Cemetery
Blue Cedar Drive
Boatmans Lane, Walsall Wood - Lathams Bridge near Binary House
Boundary Road, Streetly outside number 2 - junction Goodwood Drive

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Bridge Street, Clayhanger junction High Street
Bridgeman Street, Walsall - opposite Station Street
Bridgnorth Grove, Willenhall - opposite number 2
Broad Lane, Bloxwich (on embankment opposite 112 Tintern crescent)
Broadway North, Walsall - opposite number 36
Broadway Safer Working Partnership
Burnside Gardens, Park Hall, Walsall junction Lodge Rd outside number 30
Byeways, Bloxwich - (side of number 93 Stoney Lane)
Caldmore Road, Walsall - next to lamp column 8 - opposite number 54
Camden Street - next to number 38, Walsall Wood - junction Black Cock Bridge
Carlton Avenue, Pheasey - junction Carlton Croft
Castle Street, Brownhills - junction Castle Close
Castlefort Road, Walsall Wood - junction Fort Crescent
Cedar Avenue, Brownhills
Charlemont Road, Walsall - junction Camberra Road
Charlesdale Drive, Aldridge – outside number 1
Chase Road, Brownhills
Chepstow Road, Bloxwich
Churnhill Road, Aldridge outside shops
Clockmill Road, Pelsall - junction Clockmill Avenue
Coltham Road, Willenhall - junction Wood Lane
Comsey Road, Pheasey – outside number 34
New Invention, The Square
Coppice Lane, Willenhall - opposite Amery Club
Cotswold Grove, Willenhall
Countess Street, Walsall
Crail Grove, Pheasey
Darlaston Library
Darlington Street - opposite number 6, junction New Cross Street
Daw End Lane junction Lime Grove
Dolphin Close, Walsall
Dunbar Grove, Pheasey outside number 1
Earl St, Walsall
Elmstead Close - opposite number 1 - junction Downham Close, Walsall
Elmtree Road, Streetly - junction Cherrywood Road outside number 3
Erdington Road, Streetly - side of number 119 in Hayfield Grove
Farrier Road, Pheasey – outside number 28 junction Crome Road
Featherstone Road, Streetly junction Hardwick Road
Field Maple Drive, Streetly

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Field Road, Bloxwich, junction Victoria Avenue
Foley Road East, Streetly
Foley Road West, Streetly - outside Foley Arms pub
Foley Road West, Streetly - opposite Hazelwood Road
Fordbrook Lane, High Heath - opposite number 73
Foxwood Avenue, Birmingham – outside number 4
Garnet Avenue, Pheasey – outside number 1
Glebe Street, Walsall - outside Social Security building
Gough Street, Willenhall – outside number 74 Stringes Lane
Greenwood Road/Hillside, Aldridge - junction of Hill View
Harden Road, Goscote (on Coalpool bridge opposite 258 Harden Road)
Hatherton Street Car Park near Walsall Housing Group building
Hawthorne Road, Shelfield - junction Lichfield Road
Hazelwood Road, Streetly - junction Cedar Road
Hazelwood Road, Streetly - junction Limetree Road
Heath Acre, Moxley – corner of Holyhead Road Service Road
Hereford Close, Aldridge
Helston Rd junction Cambourne Road
High Street, Walsall - junction Goodall Street
High Street, Walsall Wood - outside St Johns Medical Centre
Highgate Road - junction Sandwell Avenue
Highgate Road - junction Avion Road
Hillcrest Gardens - junction Longwood Rise Willenhall
Hillingford Avenue, Pheasey - junction Horsley Road outside number 32
Hillside, Brownhills - junction Friezland Lane by lamp column 19
Hilton Road Allens Centre
Hollands Way, Walsall Wood
Hollyoak Road, Sutton Coldfield - opposite number 7
Horsley Road, Pheasey – outside number 1
Inglewood Grove, Streetly - junction Wood Lane
Intown Row, Walsall - opposite 5 th Battalion Club (on car park)
Ivanhoe Road, Pheasey - outside number 49
Kinross Crescent, Pheasey - junction Berwick Close
Knaves Castle Avenue, Brownhills
Latimer Street, Willenhall - side of number 13
Laurel Drive junction Maxholm Road
Laurel Drive junction Mullberry Walk
Lawson Close, Aldridge - outside number 21
Lawson Close, Aldridge, Walsall - opposite number 5
Leamore Lane, Bloxwich - junction Reaymer Close
Leighton Close, Pheasey - outside number 16

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Leighton Road - outside number 44 Great Bridge Road, Moxley
Leyland Croft, Pelsall - on roundabout
Licfield Road, Walsall Wood - junction Coppice Road by bus shelter
Lichfield Road- outside number 162, Walsall Wood - junction Shire Ridge
Lichfield Road, Sandhills, Brownhills - opposite number 2
Lichfield Road, Sandhills, Brownhills - opposite number 52
Lichfield Road, Sandhills, Brownhills - opposite number 84
Lichfield Street, Walsall side of Library
Lime Tree Road, Streetly - junction Beechcroft Crescent outside number 68
Lime Tree Road, Streetly - junction Beechcroft Crescent outside number 3
Lincoln Rd, Walsall junction Princes Avenue
Linton Road, Pheasey – outside number 12
Little London, Walsall – corner of access road to flats
Livingston Road, Bloxwich - junction Green Rock Lane
Longwood Rise, Willenhall junction Hillcrest Gardens
Longwood Road / Beacon Hill junction at traffic lights
Lowlands Avenue / Aldridge Road junction, Streetly
Lowlands Avenue, Streetly - junction with Lilac Ave, outside number 72 Lowlands Avenue
Lysways Street, Walsall - junction Hanch Place
Marklew Close, Brownhills
Marwood Croft, Streetly junction Carlton Avenue
Maybrook Road, Walsall Wood - outside Unit 21
Maybrook Road, Walsall Wood - junction Coppice Road
Maybrook Road, Walsall Wood -o/s freight terminal
Mill Place, Harden - outside number 1 Mill Place, junction Coalpool Lane
Monmer Lane, Willenhall - on bridge before the garage
Netherhall Avenue Estate, Pheasey, side of number 4
Nevison Road, Pheasey - junction of Waverley Road
New Road, Brownhills - junction Church Road opposite number 38
New Street, Walsall - next to lighting column 1,
New Street, Rushall - junction Rowley Place (Rushall Mews)
New Street, Shelfield
Newquay Road, Park Hall, Walsall - opposite Newquay Close
Nighwood Drive, Streetly - junction Laneside Avenue
Norfolk New Road, Walsall (turning head)
Old Lindons Close Streetly
Paddock Lane, Walsall
Pargeter Street / Wolverhampton Road, Walsall
Pelsall Village Centre
Penryn Rd, Walsall

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Pheasey Library, on car park
Phoenix Rise, Darlaston - side of number 3
Pinetree Drive, Streetly - junction Whitethorn Crescent outside number 28
Pinfold Court, Darlaston
Pinfold Lane, Streetly - opposite Crook Lane on verge
Pinley Grove, Pheasey – outside number 2
Pinson Road, Willenhall – near junction Somerford Place
Planetree Road, Streetly - junction Yewtree Road opposite number 22
Pleck Library
Pomeroy Road, Pheasey – outside number 59
Pommel Close, Walsall – junction Segundo Road
Quantock Close, Brownhills
Queslett Road, Pheasey - opposite Allingham Grove, on verge
Queslett Road, Pheasey - opposite number 226
Raymond Close, North Walsall - opposite number 8
Reaburn Road, Pheasey - outside Pheasy Park Primary school
Redruth Road, Park Hall, Walsall - opposite number 43
Ridgeway, Aldridge – outside number 22
Roberts Road, Coalpool outside number 9
Rollingmill Street, Walsall - right side of cemetary entrance
Rushall Library
Ryecroft Cemetery
Sandbeds Road , Willenhall - junction High Road and Haley Street
Selmans Hill, Bloxwich - opposite number 54
Selvey Avenue, Streetly - turning head
Sherlock Close, Willenhall - junction Lowbridge Close
Short Street, Brownhills - outside St James House
Simmonds Place, Brownhills - junction Hillside
Skip Lane, Walsall - junction Brackenwood Road
Sneyd Lane, New Invention - junction Crab Lane
Somerford Place, Willenhall - before the bridge on right
South Walsall Library
St Austell Road junction Penryn Road
St Giles School, Willenhall
St Ives Road, Park Hall, Walsall - junction Newquay Road
St Johns Road, Brownhills - outside number 18
Stirling Crescent, Willenhall – junction of The Hayes
Stirling Crescent, Willenhall - opposite number 23 junction of The Hayes
Stonehurst Road, Pheasey - opposite Selvey Road
Stoney Lane, Bloxwich - junction Millfield Avenue
Stoney Lane, Bloxwich - opposite number 143

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Stoney Lane, Bloxwich - opposite number 73
Straight Road, Willenhall – outside number 48 Straight Road
Streetly Library
Streetly Crematorium
Sutton Road, Street – near to the junction of Beacon Road
Sutton Road, Walsall – outside nummber 497
Tamworth Close, Brownhills – by parking bays
The Crescent, Willenhall – opposite Robin Hood pub
The Crescent, Willenhall - end of Fletchers Lane
The Pines, Walsall - junction Emery Close
Thistle Down Close
Tyndale Crescent, Pheasey - opposite number 74
Union Street, Walsall - opposite Millsum House flats
Upper Rushall Street, Walsall – at the junction of Church Hill
Vale View, Aldridge – at the junction of Whetstone Lane
Valley View, Brownhills - junction Catshill Road
Vicarage Walk, Caldmore, Walsall - near to number 13
Victoria Road, Darlaston - opposite Victoria House
Wallows Lane opposite number 148
Walsall Road, Rushall – at the junction of Pelsall Lane (by bridge)
Walsall Road, Aldridge – at the junction of Station Roa
Walsall Wood Library
Warewell Street, Walsall - junction Balls Hill
Wayside Gardens, Willenhall – at the junction of Furzebank Way
Well Lane, Bloxwich – at the junction of Walker Road
West Bromwich Road, Walsall - next to lamp column 16 (opposite 250)
Westville Road, Walsall - outside number 4
Whetsone Lane, Aldridge - outside number 233
Whitmore Street, Walsall – junction of New Mills Street
Willenhall Lane, Bloxwich
Willenhall Lawn Cemetery
Willenhall Library
Wimpress Way, Pheasey - junction Beacon Road
Wolverhampton Street, Darlaston – opposite the Staffordshire Knot pub
Wood Lane, Pelsall, at the junction of Forge Road
Woodside Road, Walsall – on roundabout at Calthorpe Road
Yewtree Road, Streetly – at the junction of Elmtree Road opposite number 74

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SALT BIN REQUEST ASSESSMENT FORM

Road Name _____

Name of Assessor _____

Location _____

Requested By _____

Ward _____

Date of Date Assessment _____

1. Gradient of Carriageway

Greater than 1 in 10	100	
1 in 10 to 1 in 15	50	
1 in 16 to 1 in 30	30	
Less than 1 in 30	Nil	

2. Carriageway Horizontal Alignment

Bend < 100m Radius	60	
Bend < 250m Radius	20	
Bend > 250m Radius	Nil	

3. Close Proximity (25m) and Falling Towards

A road	90	
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B road	75	
Classified unnumbered road	50	
Unclassified road	30	

(For use with new requests only existing salt bin locations to remain)

4. Number of Premises for Which Only Access (cul-de-sac)

Over 50	30	
20 to 50	20	
0 to 20	Nil	

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TOTAL SCORE (min 200 required)
SALT BIN APPROVED - YES / NO

Advice to members of the Public

- There's no law to prevent you from clearing snow and ice on the footpaths outside your property or public spaces but anyone clearing footways should be careful, use common sense and not do anything which would make the footway more dangerous to use.
- Your safety is of paramount importance so always wear high visibility vest, warm clothing and sturdy footwear when undertaking snow clearance.
- Only clear snow from pavements and footways; do not clear snow from any roads.
- Always face oncoming traffic when working near a carriageway.
- If you are working alone, always tell a friend or relative where you are and when you are likely to return.
- If you can, start to clear the snow before it's compacted by people walking on it.
- Always bend your knees and not your back when shoveling snow.
- Spread salt as you progress to stop ice forming on the area you have cleared.
- Think carefully about where you pile snow; do not block driveways, drainage channels and never place it in the road.
- Do not use water to melt snow and ice, this will just re freeze and make the pathway more slippery.
- Always take regular breaks as snow clearance is hard work.
- Always wear gloves to prevent salt contamination on your hands and pay particular attention to avoid salt contact with your eyes.

Communications

The provision of timely and accurate information about current and predicted road network conditions is vital in assisting the travelling public with their journey planning decisions.

The Council will provide regular updates through a range of social media, its corporate website and through variable message signs located at strategic points on the road network.

Motorists are advised to be prepared for the worst, and always consider if the journey is essential prior to departure. When the journey is essential, motorists are advised to check the weather conditions first and if possible plan their journey around parts of the road network subject to treatment.

Information on current adverse weather conditions and the council winter service response to those conditions can be found on the following link:

[Walsall Council's Winter Service webpage](#)

Public Self Help

Guidance has been published by the Department for Transport on how the public can assist their communities in clearing snow and ice without fear of litigation. This useful Information can be found on the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/clear-snow-road-path-cycleway>

Decision Making Procedure

Decision makers will determine and coordinate the Council response to winter weather conditions. The decision maker will review the weather forecast information, data available from weather stations locate within the borough and taking account of the National Winter Service Research Group practical guide for winter service, March 2019.

All decision making is accurately recorded to aid learning and development for decision makers whilst providing an audit trail of the council’s winter service response.

SAMPLE DECISION MAKING PROCEDURE (FOR GUIDANCE ONLY)

Recommended Spread Rates – Dry Salting (g/m ²) Treatment Matrix 8.6.7				
Road Surface Temperature (RST) when frost/ice is predicted	Spreader Capability			
	Fair		Good	
	Dry/Damp Road	Wet Road	Dry/Damp Road	Wet Road
At or above -1.0°C	8	8	8	8
-1.1°C to -2.0°C	8	11	8	8
-2.1°C to -3.0°C	9	17	8	13
-3.1°C to -4.0°C	12	23	9	17
-4.1°C to -5.0°C	14	28	11	21
-5.1°C to -7.0°C	20	39	15	30
-7.1°C to -10.0°C	27	54	20	40
-10.1°C to -15.0°C	38	75	28	56

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DECISION MAKERS ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The winter service decision maker will be responsible for determining when, and at what time, and to what extent the council's winter service operational plan is put into operation.

The post holder will mobilise the contractor, detail the spread rate, update relevant databases and notify colleagues and selected external partner agencies each time the service is required.

The Winter Service decision maker will:

- Be given training relevant to the role.
- Assess the forecast weather and road surface temperature forecasts that are provided four times each day with a view to determining whether Winter Service provision is required.
- Keep the contractor informed as to whether the provision of Winter Service is being considered, or whether the forecast is such that normal operations will be possible.
- Notify the contractor of the decision made.
- Liaise with colleagues, both within Walsall and across the West Midlands as required.
- Liaise with our forecast provider when further advice is required and receive calls when there is a significant forecast change that is likely to warrant further action.
- Liaise with the Emergency Planning Duty Officer regarding any significant incidents on or affecting the highway.
- Keep relevant spreadsheets up to date and send communications to colleagues and selected external agencies on the decision made.

Sample Winter Service Decision Maker Daily Record Sheet

Decision maker name:

Date:

Forecaster's Name:

Forecast and Decision Record

Time of Issue:

Forecast Summary	RAG	MIN RST	MIN AIR	TIME RST <0°

Appendix A – Winter Service Operational Plan 2023-2028

Action:

Cabinet – 18 October 2023

Proposed Early Years Supplementary Grant (EYSG) for two, three & four years olds - 2023/24

Portfolio: Councillor M. Statham, Education and Skills

Related portfolios: Councillor M. Bird, Leader of the Council

Service: Children's Services: Education

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 Following the approval of the local Walsall Early Years Funding Formula for 2023/24 by Cabinet in March 2023, the government announced in the 2023 Spring Budget in April 2023 that they would be providing additional funding of £204m in 2023/24 to support existing early years entitlements for disadvantaged 2-year-old children and 3 and 4-year-old children.
- 1.2 This is in addition to existing hourly rates approved by Cabinet in March 2023, and so a further report to confirm how that funding will be allocated is now required, with the council able to increase the amount of funding paid to childcare providers for the existing childcare entitlement offers for the period September 2023 to March 2024. This report sets out the proposed method of distribution for this funding.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Following the approval of the local Walsall Early Years Funding Formula for 2023/24 by Cabinet in March 2023 the 2023 Spring Budget announced additional funding for the existing early years entitlements for disadvantaged 2-year-old children and 3 and 4-year-old children for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years. This is in addition to the previous settlements for those years.
- 2.2 For the 2023/24 financial year, the Government will provide £204m of supplementary funding to local authorities through a new Early Years Supplementary Grant (EYSG), and not through Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). This will be used to increase the hourly amounts paid to local authorities, so that the amount of funding early years childcare providers receive for delivering the entitlements for the period September 2023 to March 2024 is also increased.
- 2.3 The EYSG hourly rate increases, as set out in **Appendix A**, for each local authority have been announced with EYSG allocations due to be published in late September 2023. **NB: final report will be updated with published allocation.**

- 2.4 The EYSG payment made to each local authority will be based on January 2023 census data with a further reconciliation adjustment made during the spring term 2024 based on January 2024 census data.
- 2.5 EYSG will provide supplementary funding for all existing early years funding streams:
- 15 hours entitlement for disadvantaged 2-year-olds
 - 15 hours universal entitlement for 3 and 4-year-olds
 - 15 hours additional entitlement for 3 and 4-year-old children of working parents
 - maintained nursery schools supplementary funding
 - early years pupil premium
 - disability access fund
- 2.6 The amendment to the local funding formula will only be required for 2023/24 as for the 2024/25 financial year the additional funding (currently estimated to total £288m nationally) will be allocated to local authorities through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) rather than as a supplementary grant, and this additional funding will be included within the hourly rates set within the Early Years Funding Formula for 2024/25.

3. Recommendations

Subject to outcome of the discussion of Walsall's Schools Forum at their meeting on 17th October 2023:

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes the work undertaken by officers and recommends that the Early Years Supplementary Grant (EYSG) allocation is passed on to childcare providers in full for 2023/24 at the end of the autumn 2023 and spring 2024 terms following a reconciliation.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 All local authorities in England that fund early years provision are eligible to receive the EYSG and are required to increase the amounts they pay to their early years providers in accordance with the EYSG conditions.

Proposed distribution of Early Years Supplementary Grant for 2023/24

- 4.2 It is proposed that the hourly rate increases set out in **Appendix A** are passed on in full to childcare providers. However, because EYSG is a specific grant and not part of DSG, the council will make a supplementary payment (rather than adjusting the hourly rate approved by Cabinet in March 2023) at the end of the autumn 2023 and spring 2024 terms based on actual hours of provision for 2 year olds and 3

and 4 year olds, along with any entitlement for those other funding streams set out in paragraph 3.5.

- 4.3 Childcare providers will still receive their main three funding payments each term i.e. indicative payments of 75% of expected funding due at the start of the term, unvalidated payments of the remaining 25% of expected funding due toward the end of the term and a final validated payment based on actual hours of childcare delivered after the end of the term. EYSG payments will then be paid as an additional amount at the end of the term following a reconciliation of actual hours of childcare delivered.
- 4.4 This reconciliation will reduce the risk of clawback from government for EYSG as the indicative funding to the council is based on the January 2023 census, with the final allocation being updated based on the January 2024 census. By providing payments to childcare providers at the end of the autumn 2023 and spring 2024 terms this will reduce both the administrative costs for the council and reduce the need to clawback of funding from childcare providers should their January 2024 census be lower than their January 2023 census.
- 4.5 Payments for Maintained Schools Nursery Supplement, Early Years Pupil Premium and Disability Access Fund will also be made at the end of the autumn 2023 and spring 2024 terms.

5. Council Plan priorities

- 5.1 The Council Plan 2022-25 sets out the Council's purpose along with the priorities, with the aim of reducing inequalities and maximising potential. Ensuring that the distribution of EYSG is seen as equitable and is transparent to those who have been consulted with, such as Schools Forum, when approving the distribution method directly links to the Council's priorities for outcomes linked to education and enabling children to have the best possible start.

6. Risk management

- 6.1 Individual settings may see movements in the actual funds that are paid to them where the numbers of children taking up entitlement, have changed. Settings will, as they always have done, need to manage these changes within their overall funding. Where the impact of that is significant for any individual school the authority will work with the school concerned to provide support in managing that.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The exact financial impact on individual providers cannot be predicted at this time as this will be dependent on actual hours of funded childcare that are delivered during 2023/24.
- 7.2 This report proposes passing on the additional funding in full, but to reduce financial risk of clawback or overspend to the council (and to providers) also proposes that the additional funding is paid at the end of each term based on actual

hours delivered (which is in line with the way in which the funding will be allocated to the council).

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 The DfE has prescribed the way in which early years providers should be financed for the 2023/24 financial year. These guidelines are set out in the Early Years Entitlement 2023 to 2024 operational guide, and can be found at the following link:

[Early years entitlements: local authority funding operational guide 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-entitlement-2023-to-2024-operational-guide)

- 8.2 The purpose of these arrangements is to help secure greater consistency in the way in which funding is distributed to early years providers. The Council must follow the rules issued by DfE within The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations, and the proposed Walsall local early years funding formula sets out how funding will be allocated to early years providers in Walsall within the prescribed arrangements.

- 8.3 The DfE have also provided Guidance for local authorities on the early years supplementary grant, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-supplementary-grant-2023-to-2024>

9. Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 9.1 Schools are required to comply with the Council's procurement rules and policies in conducting their business.

10. Property implications

- 10.1 Unless any schools in Walsall were to close, there will be no property implications associated with this report.

11. Health and wellbeing implications

- 11.1 The content of this report has taken into account the Marmot objectives and it is confirmed that the proposals have been tested against the relevant considerations in this respect. As such there has been no indication that the proposed distribution method for EYSG would have any adverse impact on the health and wellbeing of staff and pupils based at Walsall schools.

12. Staffing implications

- 12.1 If individual providers see movement in the actual funding paid to them, due to movements in pupil numbers or changes in need, there is a risk that staff posts may also need to be reduced.

13. Reducing Inequalities

13.1 As part of the consultation on the implementation of an early years national funding formula the government undertook a full equality impact assessment, taking into account the relevant protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010. A copy of the equality impact assessment is attached to this report.

14. Climate Change

14.1 There are no direct Climate Change implications arising from this report.

15. Consultation

15.1 Consultation has been undertaken with Schools Forum which is made up of representatives of maintained schools and academies within Walsall and representatives from the private sector for early years providers.

16. Decide

16.1 That Cabinet approves the distribution of EYSG to early years providers in full as recommended by Walsall's Schools Forum at their meeting on 17 October 2023.

17. Respond

17.1 Subject to approval of the recommendations and confirmation of the 2023/24 EYSG allocation in September 2023, supplementary payments will be made to early years providers in autumn 2023 and spring 2024 terms based on actual hours of provision.

18. Review

18.1 Schools will be expected to monitor and stay within their delegated budget. The local authority will continue to provide support to schools to ensure that robust financial monitoring is carried out. Walsall's Schools Forum will continue to receive financial performance reports to monitor usage of school's budgets

18.2 For private and voluntary providers regular support from the Early Years Team is provided to ensure continuity of provision.

Background papers

Schools Forum Report 17 October 2023 – Proposed Early Years Supplementary Grant (EYSG) for two, three & four year olds 2023/24

ESFA – Early Years Supplementary Grant Guidance 2023/24

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6th October 2023



Councillor Statham
Portfolio Holder
Education & Skills

6th October 2023

Early Years Supplementary Grant (EYSG) rates on existing Early Years Rates

Funding Factor	2023 to 2024 funding rate (April to March) (£ per hour)	2023 to 2024 EYSG rate (September to March) (£ per hour)	2023 to 2024 Combined rate (September to March) (£ per hour)	Change to 2023 to 2024 EYLFF rate (%)
Early Years Entitlement for Disadvantaged 2 year olds	£5.51	£1.66	£7.17	30.1%
3 & 4 year olds - Universal Hourly Base rate	£4.86	£0.31	£5.17	6.4%
3 & 4 year olds - Extended Hourly Base rate	£4.86	£0.31	£5.17	6.4%
Maintained Nursery Schools Supplement for 3 & 4 YO provision	£3.80	£0.21	£4.01	6.0%
Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)	£0.62	£0.04	£0.66	6.5%
Disability Access Fund (DAF)	£828.00 pa lump sum	£30.92 (7/12 months) (£53.00 annual increase)	£858.92 (7/12 months) (£881 full year)	3.7% (6.4% full year)

Cabinet – 18 October 2023

Proposed Schools Local Funding Formula 2024/25

Portfolio: Councillor M. Statham, Education and Skills

Related portfolios: Councillor M. Bird, Leader of the Council

Service: Children's Services: Education

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 In December 2022, following a full consultation with all mainstream schools in Walsall in October 2022, Cabinet approved, a transition to full National Funding Formula (NFF) rates over a period of two years (2023/24 and 2024/25) as endorsed by Schools Forum.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The first stage of the transition was implemented in 2023/24 where funding factor rates were moved 50% closer to NFF rates and previously unused funding factors (Free Schools Meals 6 and Pupil Mobility) were added and used for the first time.
- 2.2 The aim of this report is to obtain the approval of Cabinet to finish the transition by continue with the second and final stage to implement NFF rates in full from the 2024/25 funding year, with that being the recommended basis for the local Mainstream Schools Funding formula for the year.

3. Recommendations

Subject to outcome of the discussion of Walsall's Schools Forum at its meeting on 17th October 2023:

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes that the recommendation for the basis of the local mainstream schools funding formula for 2024/25 is to implement the National Funding Formula (NFF) rates in full from that year, which is in line with the full consultation exercise undertaken in 2022 and the endorsement of Schools Forum and approval of Cabinet following that in December 2022.
- 3.2 Cabinet to note the provisional Schools Block allocation of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding that the modelling for 2024/25 has been based on.

- 3.3 That Cabinet notes that, once the final Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations for 2024/25 have been issued in December 2023, a further report will be presented to Schools Forum at their meeting in January 2024 confirming the final allocation and funding factor values.
- 3.5 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills to amend the formula in line with Department for Education requirements and to comply with relevant funding regulations for the 2024/25 Schools Funding Formula.

4. Report detail - know

Context

Funding Formula Background

- 4.1 The schools local funding formula is the process that is utilised (informed by national guidance which details the funding factors that can be incorporated) to allocate the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding that the Council receives to the mainstream schools in the Borough of Walsall. The Department for Education (DfE) requires each Local Authority, in consultation with their Schools Forum, to produce a schools local funding formula for the following financial year, by the third week in January each year. Due to the timing of Schools Forum and Cabinet meetings this therefore normally requires the agreement in advance of the DfE informing each Local Authority of their Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for that year (as this is not normally provided until the last week in December each year).
- 4.2 The implementation of the schools National Funding Formula (NFF) commenced from April 2018 to allow for a more equitable and comparable distribution of funding to schools across the country compared to the previous methodology (which was in the main based on historic spending on education in each area rather than on the basis of need).
- 4.3 Allocations for each school are calculated nationally by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) under the values associated with the NFF, and the totality of that funding is then allocated to Walsall as a whole as the local authority is still then able to operate a local funding formula to calculate individual school budgets due to national delays in implementing the NFF in full.
- 4.4 Following DfE consultations during 2021 and 2022, the Government announced their response which confirmed their intention to move forward with plans to implement the NFF in full with a period of transition and to ensure all allowable NFF factors are used in local formulae from 2023/24.
- 4.5 Due to Walsall being a local authority that had a local formula that differed significantly from NFF rates and did not include all allowable funding factors a full consultation exercise with all mainstream schools in Walsall was completed ahead of 2023/24 funding year.

- 4.6 The outcome of the consultation was in favour of implementation of NFF in full as soon as possible, but to allow time for schools who may have been negatively impacted by that to manage that change Schools Forum endorsed a recommendation to transition in full to the NFF over a two year period (a move half way to the full NFF in 2023/24 and then a move to the full NFF from 2024/25) which was also supported by Cabinet.

NFF Provisional Allocations 2024/25

- 4.7 The DfE have published provisional allocations for 2024/25, with Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG) (one off funding received in 2023/24 to support schools with increases in costs for pay awards and energy costs) rolled in, setting out the funding that would be received under an NFF calculation assuming no underlying changes in pupil numbers and characteristics from October 2022 census data.
- 4.8 This provisional data shows a potential increase in Schools Block funding of £7.8m for 2024/25 (prior to any amendments to funding relating to any increases or decreases in the overall number of pupils being supported). This equates to a 2.7% increase in funding.
- 4.9 It should be noted though that the actual level of Schools Block DSG that will be payable to Walsall Council for 2024/25, which is normally provided during the last week in December each year, will be based on the pupil numbers and characteristics set out within the Schools Census carried out during October 2023.
- 4.10 There are also a number of schools within Walsall where, due to increased need for places, the Council have completed expansions within the last 7 years which are not yet full in each year group. This group of schools are therefore expected to see an increase in pupil numbers, above those contained within the October 2023 census, for the period September 2024 to March 2025.
- 4.11 As these pupils will not be in place when the October 2023 census is completed the local funding formula must recognise these additional children and seek to allocate funding for them from within the 'Growth Funding' allocation that is provided to authorities within the Schools Block of DSG to account for these potential changes.

Financial Modelling for 2024/25 Individual School Budgets

- 4.12 Financial modelling using the 2024/25 provisional NFF allocation and October 2022 pupil numbers and characteristics has been completed, assuming that in line with the previous agreement the local funding formula mirrors the NFF in full from that year, and shows a positive outcome for the majority of schools.
- 4.13 The modelling shows a financial gain for all schools with the exception of one primary school which shows a small reduction of £7.6k (-0.77%). As above though the modelling can only be based on October 2022 pupil data at present, and the final position for this school may change once October 2023 pupil data is applied.

- 4.14 The modelling shows an average gain for a primary school of circa £30k (+1.61%) and an average gain for a secondary school of circa £256k (+3.53%).
- 4.15 The maximum allowable Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) of +0.5% has been used in the modelling. This offers protection against per-pupil funding losses between the funding years.
- 4.16 The overall position shows that the NFF factor rates and MFG of +0.5% are affordable within the provisional allocation. If this should change when the final allocation and October 2023 pupil data are announced, then further modelling will be carried out with proposed adjustments to factor rates recommended to Schools Forum in January 2024.

Primary / Secondary Funding Ratio Split

- 4.17 The funding ratio split between primary and secondary schools was 1:1.27 for 2023/24 and the proposed local formula for 2024/25 would move that to a ratio of 1:1.29, based on the modelling undertaken – which is more aligned to the national split of funding under the NFF of 1:1.30 and which the DfE / government would expect local authorities to be working toward.

Funding Formula Factors

- 4.18 Set out below is a brief summary of the factors that must be included within any proposed funding formula for 2024/25:

Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU)

- 4.19 AWPU is the biggest part of the funding formula, it is the funding which has not been allocated to the other specific factors and is allocated on a per pupil basis. The AWPU rates are different for Primary and Secondary children.

Deprivation

- 4.20 Walsall allocates funds to schools to meet the additional needs that children from deprived backgrounds may face for both the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) measure of deprivation and the number of children who receive free school meals (FSM). The updated regulations now also include the ability to allocate funding via an 'FSM6' Free School Meals factor (which represents the number of pupils per school who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years). Previous work has highlighted that this composite measure should ensure that all schools experiencing deprivation will receive some funding to help them. DfE also allocate Pupil Premium funding outside of Walsall's formula to support deprivation, and this is also allocated utilising the 'FSM6' Free School Meals measure.

Lump Sum

- 4.21 A lump sum is an amount of funding that each school receives without reference to pupil numbers, deprivation, buildings etc. This is designed to cover the costs all schools need to meet regardless of their size. The maximum lump sum allowable under the regulations is currently £175,000 per school.

Low Attainment

- 4.22 The only factor allowable to take account of Special Educational Needs (SEN) in the funding formula for mainstream schools is low attainment, which looks at the number of Primary pupils identified as not achieving the expected level of development. The Walsall funding formula then allocates an amount of funding to provide schools with the resources required to support these children.

English as an Additional Language

- 4.23 For pupils where English is an additional language funding is allocated through the formula to allow schools to provide additional support for a period of up to 3 years after they enter the statutory school system.

Pupil Mobility

- 4.24 This measure allows authorities to allocate additional funding to schools based on numbers of pupils who entered a school during the last three academic years but did not start in August or September (or January for reception pupils).

Business Rates

- 4.25 Business rates for each school are funded through the formula based on an estimate of cost.

Split Sites

- 4.26 The purpose of this factor is to support schools which have unavoidable extra costs because the school buildings are on separate sites.

Premise Rental – Exceptional Factor

- 4.27 One school in the Borough has to pay extra costs relating to rent. The rationale for allowing this funding factor is that it is similar to business rates. There has been individual agreement with the DfE to allow this factor.

- 4.28 The following factors are allowable but have either not been used in the Walsall funding formula or do not apply:

- Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts – Not applicable as there are no schools in Walsall where there are additional unfunded costs due to PFI contracts.
- London fringe – Not applicable as this is only applicable to local authorities who have some but not all of their schools within the London fringe area.

- Sparsity – Not applicable as this factor is used to support schools in rural areas where there are on average smaller year groups.

5. Council Plan priorities

- 5.1 The recommended funding formula is seen as equitable and is transparent to those who have been consulted with when setting the formula. The funding formula will not alter the total amount of funding given to Walsall schools and as such the role that schools play in meeting Council objectives will not be adversely impacted by the proposed funding formula.

6. Risk management

- 6.1 Where schools see fluctuations in pupil numbers (or changes in pupil characteristics) between 2023/24 and 2024/25 they will see an impact on final budgets that are allocated as they always have (and there will also be schools who gain from this process where pupil numbers have increased). Where schools do see a reduction in per pupil funding the authority will seek to provide guidance and support to them where they are experiencing difficulty managing the financial impact of that as and when required.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 After analysing the provisional level of Schools Block funding of the provisional Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) available for 2024/25 and comparing it to the proposed formula and values set out in Appendix A (which are based on replicating the NFF in full), this report confirms the formula would be affordable for 2024/25.
- 7.2 The modelling that has been completed in relation to the proposed formula indicates that one school may see a small reduction in overall funding between the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial year but, however the final position for this school may change once October 2023 pupil data is applied.
- 7.3 If schools see fluctuations in pupil numbers between years this will impact on allocations, as has been the case in previous years. This could result in both increases or decreases in funding dependent on changes in pupil numbers and characteristics.
- 7.4 Once the authority receives final details of its DSG allocation for 2024/25 a further review of proposed funding factor values may be required to ensure that the final factor values that are utilised are affordable within the overall level of funding that will be available to the authority.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 The Department for Education has prescribed the way in which schools should be financed for the 2024/25 financial year. These guidelines are set out in the Schools Revenue Funding 2024 to 2025 operational guide, and can be found at the following link:

- 8.2 The purpose of these arrangements is to help secure greater consistency in the way in which funding is distributed to schools. The Council is bound to adhere to the rules issued by Department for Education, and the proposed Walsall Funding Formula sets out how funding will be allocated to schools in Walsall within the prescribed arrangements.

9. Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 9.1 None relating directly to this report.

10. Property implications

- 10.1 Unless any schools in Walsall were to close, there will be no property implications associated with this report.

11. Health and wellbeing implications

- 11.1 The content of this report has taken into account the Marmot objectives and it is confirmed that the proposals have been tested against the relevant considerations in this respect. As such there has been no indication that the proposed school funding formula would have any adverse impact on the health and wellbeing of staff and pupils based at Walsall schools.

12. Staffing implications

- 12.1 Where the proposed funding formula sees any school suffer a budget reduction Finance Officers will continue to work with and support those schools that do experience financial difficulties so that they can plan the most appropriate way in which to manage these changes.

13. Reducing Inequalities

- 13.1 The implications for reducing inequalities have been taken into account and assessed as set out below.
- 13.2 When undertaking the consultation on the implementation of the NFF, Department for Education prepared an equality impact assessment. A copy of this is attached to this report.
- 13.3 With regard to equality implications the principles followed for allocating funding for 2024/25 are set out within the report, and were based on seeking consistency of funding between years, and to limit any financial impact on individual schools whilst at the same time preparing schools for the ultimate transition to the NFF.
- 13.4 The recommended schools funding formula for 2024/25 takes account of all mandatory factors that have to be utilised. Funding is allocated to support children where English is an additional language, children with low attainment and to

support schools in meeting the additional needs that children from deprived backgrounds may face.

14. Consultation

- 14.1 Walsall Schools Forum have received a report on the proposed schools funding formula for 2024/25.
- 14.2 As set out in the report a full consultation exercise was also undertaken with all mainstream primary and secondary schools within Walsall in 2022 to address the Government's announcement of their intention to progress with the transition to NFF.

15. Decide

- 15.1 The operational guidance provided by the Department for Education identifies the allowable factors that can be utilised within the local funding formula. The formula discussed with Schools Forum was therefore based on ensuring all allowable factors were met.

16. Respond

- 16.1 Subject to approval of the recommendations and confirmation of the 2024/25 Dedicated Schools Grant in December 2023, local funding formula factors values will be finalised and used to populate the Authority Pro-forma Tool. The completed pro-forma will be submitted to the Department for Education by the required deadline in January 2024.
- 16.2 A Budget Statement for each maintained school will then be published, confirming their budget share for 2024/25 as determined by the local funding formula. In respect of mainstream academy schools the totality of budget share allocations for these schools will be top-sliced from Walsall's Dedicated Schools Grant and paid directly to academies by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

17. Review

- 17.1 Any further information releases by Department for Education in respect of NFF rates and funding factors will continue to be reviewed. In future funding years, a local funding formula that mirrors NFF rates will still need to be decided by Cabinet, in consultation with Schools Forum.

Background papers

Schools Forum Report 17 October 2023 – Proposed Schools Local Funding Formula 2024/25

ESFA – Schools revenue funding 2024 to 2025 operational guide

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6th October 2023



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6th October 2023

Detail of proposed funding formula factor values for 2024/25

Factor			2023/24 Local value	2024/25 NFF value including ACA	Current variance	Proposed 2024/25 Local value	
			£	£	£	£	
Basic Entitlement (AWPU)	Primary		3,405	3,610	(204)	3,610	
	Secondary	KS3	4,801	5,090	(289)	5,090	
		KS4	5,411	5,737	(326)	5,737	
Free School Meals	Primary		870	492	378	492	
	Secondary		995	492	503	492	
Free School Meals 6	Primary		354	833	(479)	833	
	Secondary		517	1,214	(698)	1,214	
Deprivation	Band F	Primary	225	236	(11)	236	
		Secondary	324	346	(23)	346	
	Band E	Primary	268	286	(18)	286	
		Secondary	435	457	(21)	457	
	Band D	Primary	413	452	(39)	452	
		Secondary	585	637	(52)	637	
	Band C	Primary	448	492	(44)	492	
		Secondary	638	697	(59)	697	
	Band B	Primary	479	522	(43)	522	
		Secondary	686	753	(66)	753	
	Band A	Primary	647	687	(40)	687	
		Secondary	904	953	(50)	953	
	Lump Sum	School		161,214	136,176	25,037	136,176
	Low Prior Attainment	Primary		1,015	1,189	(174)	1,189
Secondary		1,529	1,796	(267)	1,796		
English as Second Language	Primary		565	597	(32)	597	
	Secondary		1,059	1,611	(551)	1,611	
Mobility	Primary		474	973	(499)	973	
	Secondary		682	1,400	(718)	1,400	
MFG			0.5%	0.5%	-	0.5%	

Cabinet – 18 October 2023

Recommendations from Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding Children Not in School, Exclusions and Suspensions and support for children in Elective Home Education.

Portfolio: Councillor M. Statham – Education and Skills

Related Portfolios:

Service: Childrens Services (Education Directorate)

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Aim

To receive a recommendation from the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee made on 5 September 2023 regarding Children Not in School, school attendance and support for children in Elective Home Education.

2. Recommendations

That:-

1. Cabinet writes to the Secretary of State for Education requesting the introduction of the Children Not in School Register as soon as possible.
2. the Cabinet asks that the Government pay the fees for children in Elective Home Education to sit standardised examinations.
3. the Cabinet note the concerns of the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the disproportionately lower school attendance figures of boys, SEN pupils and those pupils receiving free school meals.

3. Report detail – know

At its meeting of on the 5 September 2023, the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an update report on Children not in School and Members raised concerns and recommendations in relation to the report.

Members were concerned that a Children Not in School Register had not been implemented due to the withdrawal of the Schools Bill in 2022. This was a concern due to the fact that while the Council could monitor those children who did not attend a school within the Borough, they did not have the legal power to compel parents to register their children. Meaning that it is possible for a small number of children to potentially not be known to the Council or any partner organisation and

thus not receive the necessary support especially in relation to safeguarding. The implementation of a register would close this gap and improve safeguarding.

The Committee also considered issues around Elective Home Education (EHE) and were concerned that a small number of children were not given the opportunity to sit standardised tests such as GCSE's and A-Levels due to the cost of exam fees. EHE students were expected to pay their own examination fees. Unlike their mainstream peers whose setting paid the fees. It was noted that some support with examination fees is currently provided to EHE children undertaking part time study at Walsall College. However, there were some EHE students that did not study there. Therefore, the Committee recommended that the Cabinet asks the government to support these children by paying the fees for all children in Elective Home Education to sit standardised examinations. This would provide equality with those pupils in mainstream settings.

The Committee received a detailed update on the school attendance across the Borough. The Committee was very concerned by the disproportionately lower attendance figures for boys, children with SEN (Special Educational Needs) and those receiving free school meals and wished to highlight this to the Cabinet.

4. Decide

Cabinet could choose to:

1. undertake the recommendation as set out;
2. reject them;
3. choose to receive a report in more depth at a future Cabinet meeting.

5. Respond

Following the decision of Cabinet, the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be advised of the outcome of their recommendation.

6. Review

Subject to the decision of Cabinet further reports at Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings or Cabinet meetings may be required.

Background papers

None

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