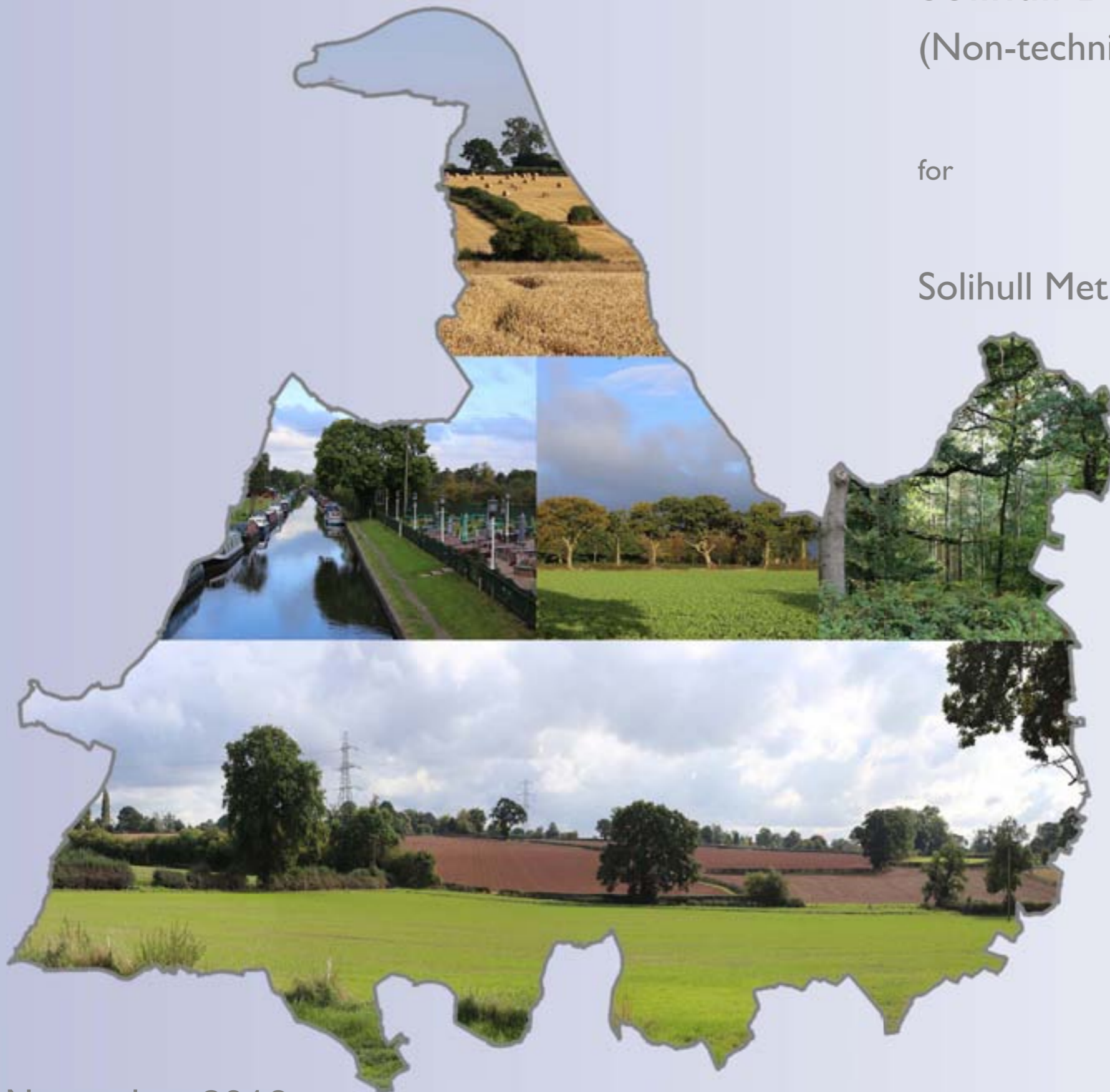


# Solihull Borough Local Character Guide (Non-technical Summary)

for

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council



November 2016

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The view from Lodge Green Lane, Meriden, looking across the arable landscape with the city of Birmingham in the distance.

## Local Character Guide

The Local Character Guide is a non-technical information document which can be used to explain the meaning, value and sensitivity of landscape character within Solihull Metropolitan Borough. The purpose of the Local Character Guide is to:

- Define landscape character;
- Explain the concept of landscape character assessment including the value, service, quality, sensitivity and capacity of landscape within Solihull;
- Outline the distinct landscape character areas within Solihull; and
- Highlight key features and/or issues of Solihull's landscape character.

## Landscape Character

Landscape character can be defined as a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another.

The character of landscape is determined by a combination of natural, cultural, social, aesthetic and perceptual influences. Geology, hydrology, climate, landform and soils are related to the natural processes that give rise to the physical structure of the landscape. These natural processes have complex interrelationships with the physical, cultural and social use and development of landscape, so influencing land cover, land use and settlement. Inextricably linked with this are the aesthetic and perceptual elements, strongly related to our own personal appreciation of landscape, how we experience it, relate to it or make use of it.

## Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Assessment is used to identify individual areas that are distinct from one another due to their prevailing characteristics and features. These individual areas are then presented in further detail by looking at the unique combination of these characteristics and features. Though one individual area may be distinct from the next in terms of its core characteristics, often the boundaries may have overlapping features or elements.

The Local Character Guide is intended to be used in conjunction with the Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment. All documents prepared through the landscape character assessment process are intended to form a part of the evidence base for Solihull's Local Plan process. The Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment provides a detailed breakdown of areas of distinct landscape character in the Borough of Solihull. It determines and describes the character and the sensitivities, pressures and capacity for each area and makes judgements about each area resulting in guidelines to help manage landscape change. The document is supplemented by other background evidence and source material.

## Sensitivities and Pressures

One outcome of the landscape character assessment is the identification of issues specific to a given landscape character area, referred to as 'sensitivities' and 'pressures'. Such considerations are directly related to landscape value.

'Sensitivities' are physical or visual aspects of landscape character which are susceptible to change. Sensitivity is deemed to be highest where landscape character is highly valued i.e. an internationally or nationally designated landscape of high quality and distinctive characteristics (e.g. National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or World Heritage Site), or any other relatively undisturbed landscape with a strong sense of place. Sensitivity is lowest in landscapes which are of low quality and/ or poor condition, capable of tolerating substantial change.

'Pressures' are the drivers which have the ability to impact upon or change landscape character and can include pressure for development, changes in agricultural practices or lapses/ neglect in landscape management practices.

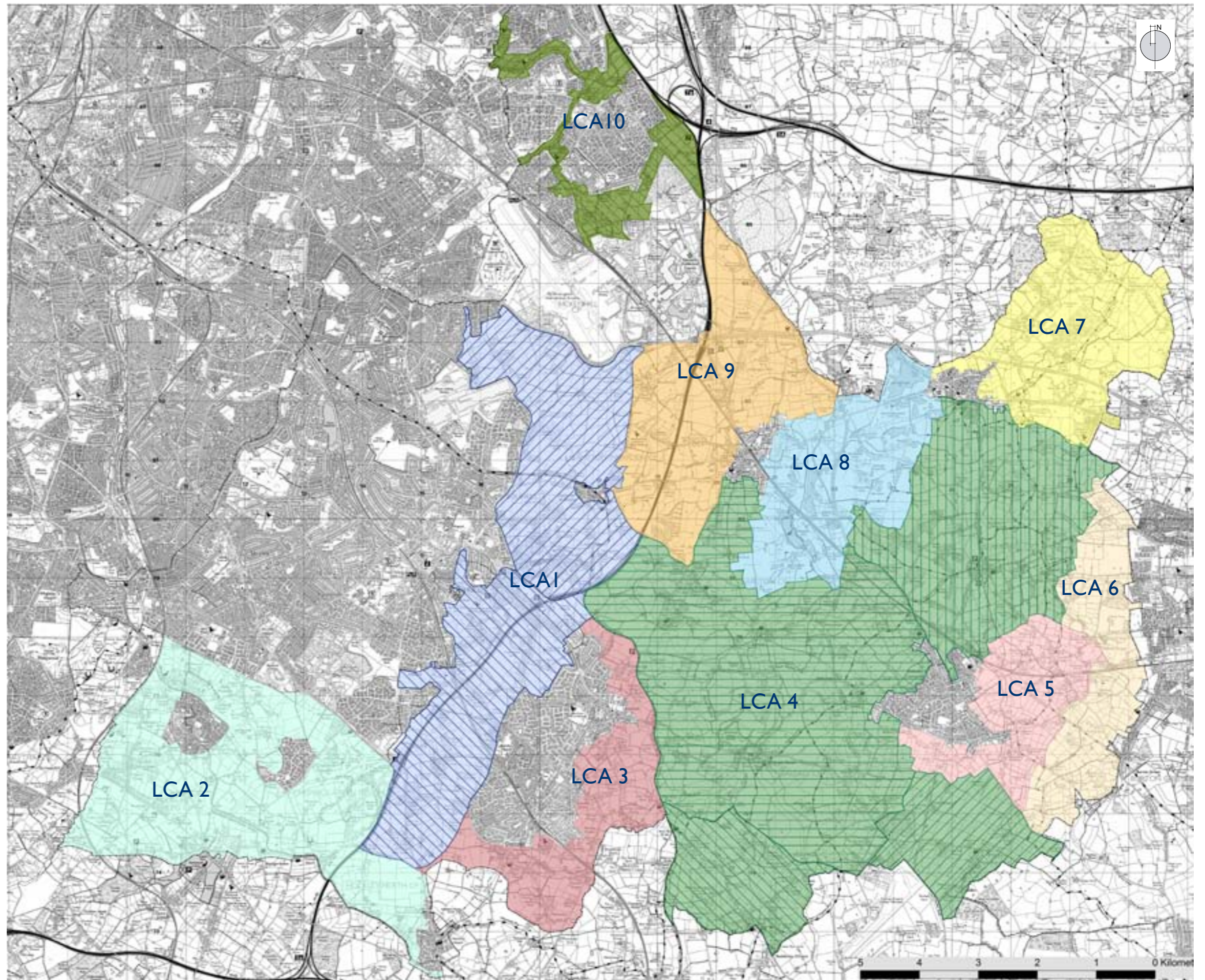
Following desktop studies, field work and consultation, ten Landscape Character Areas (LCA) have been identified within the borough.

The description, key characteristics and pressures of the ten LCAs have been set in brief in the following sheets with accompanying photographic evidence.

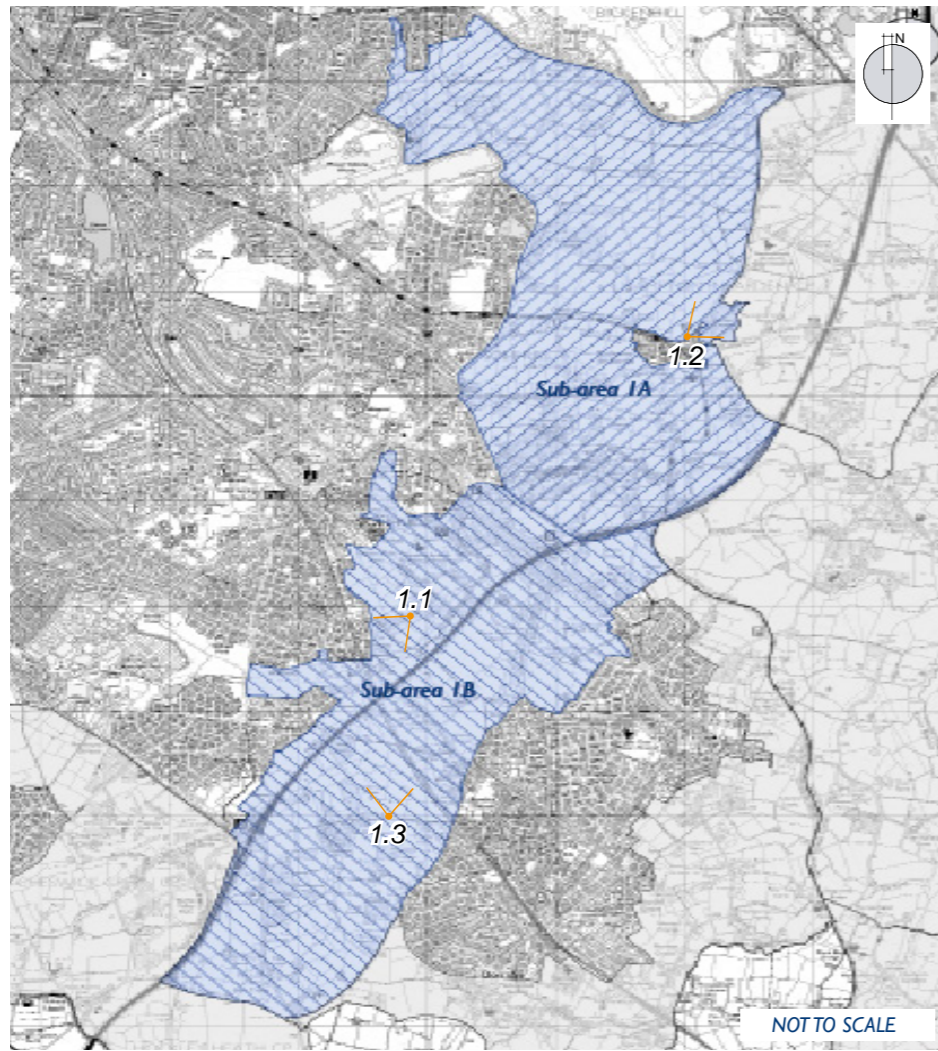
The full list of Landscape Character Areas is as follows:

- LCA 1 – Solihull Fringe
- LCA 2 – Southern Countryside
- LCA 3 – Knowle & Dorridge Fringe
- LCA 4 – Rural Centre
- LCA 5 – Balsall Common Eastern Fringe
- LCA 6 – Eastern Fringe
- LCA 7 – Northern Upland
- LCA 8 – Blythe Lowland
- LCA 9 – Motorway Corridor
- LCA 10 – Urban Green Spaces

Of these, three areas (LCA 1, LCA 4 and LCA 10) have been further divided into sub-areas, details of which can be found within the Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment.



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## Description:

This area covers just under 19km<sup>2</sup> at the eastern urban fringe of Solihull, where the settlement of Knowle and Dorridge lies to the east.

The landform across the area gently rises forming a northward facing slope extending from Birmingham International Airport towards the small settlement of Catherine-de-Barnes in the south. The mid southern extent of this area that stretches from the Grand Union Canal is characterised by the River Blythe SSSI, which has shaped a shallow valley along its course and where woodland and tree cover associated with the river valley is a key feature of the area

Land use in this character area is influenced by the direct proximity of the urban edge to the open countryside, which exhibit contrasting fields patterns where strong hedgerow boundaries exist in the north in contrast to the more irregular pattern towards the south becoming interspersed by golf courses and ribbon development extending from the urban edge of Solihull and Dorridge. Within the M42 corridor and the airport area in the north, road and air traffic noise is a significant detractor to the tranquility of the area.

A diverse range of medium distant and short distant views are prevalent across this character area, where church spires from nearby settlements such as St Peter's Church in Bickenhill and St Alphege Church in Solihull form vertical features within the views across the area.

Pockets of ancient woodlands are characteristic of this character area, which are also designated Local Wildlife Sites such as Botts Coppice and Parlour Coppice. Woodland cover is a key feature of the area such that views throughout this character area are generally typified by a backdrop of wooded land.

Table 1: Key Characteristics of LCA I - Solihull Fringe

Component	Characteristics
Topography	• Undulating landform ranging from 100m to 140m AOD
Geology	• Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) - Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone solid geology.
Soils	• Predominantly slowly permeable clayey soils, seasonally wet with impeded drainage. An area of permeable alluvial and glacial clays, sand
Drainage	• The Grand Union Canal and the River Blythe with its tributaries along with associated lakes, ponds and field ditches. • The Hatchford Brook to the north also plays an important role.
Land Use	• Arable and pastoral fields, parkland, deciduous and mixed woodland, agricultural land, residential, a few golf courses and industrial including business park
Vegetation Cover	• Tree cover is extensive with several woodlands, some of which are ancient • Strong hedgerow structure plus parkland trees east of Hampton Coppice and near Malvern & Brueton Park and east of the M42. • Bracken hedge banks along the roads form a distinctive feature.
Development	• The main settlement is Catherine-de-Barnes, however this area is located at the edge of Solihull and therefore heavily influenced by it. • Ribbon residential development. • Several scattered farmsteads and manor houses are present. • Street Lamps, communication masts, telegraph poles and electricity pylons add vertical elements.
Historic Value	• Ravenshaw Hall with its associated fords and Old Berry Hall, both being Grade II* listed buildings. • Ancient woodlands and veteran trees.
Accessibility	• The M42 dominates the north-south transportation corridor segregating the east from the west • The Chiltern Railway runs across the breadth of the site • Birmingham International airport is situated to the north of the LCA. • A network of footpaths (including the Grand Union Canal Walk) and roads criss-cross the LCA, though most follow an east to west direction connecting Solihull with other settlements.
Visual Dynamic	• The visibility in this LCA consist of generally medium to short distance views that are framed or wide, deep, upwards and horizontal orientation. • There are some long views out to the landscape in the north with views towards the airport
Key Features	• The Grand Union Canal, fords around Ravenshaw Hall and River Blythe. • Views to the historic church spires of St Peter's Church in Bickenhill and St Alphege Church in Solihull. • Strong tree cover including ancient woodland. • Bracken hedge banks along the roads. • Numerous Local Wildlife Sites.



Photograph 1.1:

Residential areas form part of the varied land use. The environment around Malvern & Brueton Park has a well wooded character.

## Sensitivities and Pressures:

- Potential loss of veteran trees and ancient woodland from development pressure.
- The straight edges of the M42 corridor are insensitive to the irregular field pattern.
- Possible increased pressure for access to open countryside from edge of Solihull and Dorridge may impact upon the rural character of the area.
- Pressure for development close to the urban edge of Solihull and Dorridge as is evident on either side of the M42 south of the A41 intersection.
- Landscape at the urban edge of Solihull and Dorridge is sensitive to loss of tree cover and is important to the rural setting of the settlement.
- Maintenance of public rights of way, which are sparsely distributed and limited footpath network close to urban edge places walkers on narrow roads.
- Decline in frequency of hedgerow trees due to neglect and lack of management and replacement.
- The southern half of the area plays an important role in separating Solihull and Dorridge and is sensitive to development which would result in coalescence. Therefore, a limited capacity to accept development.
- Pressure for new housing in this attractive commuter area close to Solihull and the M42 corridor due to the easy access. Limited capacity to accept development without impact upon character.
- Views across the area are enclosed in places for example Gate Lane and Lovelace Avenue but extensive in others such as views across from the northern extent of the area towards the settlement of Catherine-de-Barnes.
- Noise from M42 corridor and the Birmingham International Airport impacts upon tranquillity of area.
- The M42 almost defines the eastern extent of the urban edge in the south of the area with only a narrow buffer.



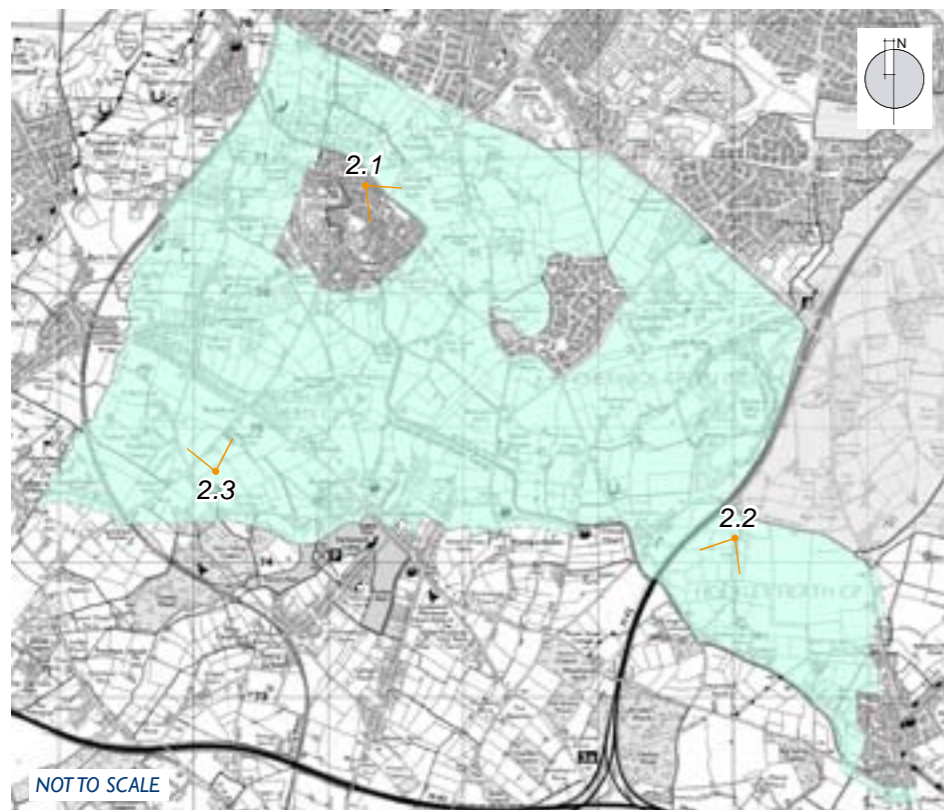
Photograph 1.2:

Road and aeroplane noise is constant. The spire of St Peter's Church, Bickenhill is a frequent landmark in the distance in views from northern parts of this LCA.



Photograph 1.3:

Arable fields are also part of the varied land use. Field boundaries are in variable condition and poor in some areas particularly in the south and to the east of the M42. In many places traditional hedgerows have been replaced with post and wire fencing.



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## Description:

This area covers approximately 14km<sup>2</sup> to the south of the Shirley area of Solihull where the main settlements are Dickens Heath, Cheswick Green and Hockley Heath.

The land gradually slopes down from the south west edge of Solihull towards the settlement of Cheswick Green with LCA 1 presiding to the east. The River Blythe along with its tributaries pass across this area and the River Cole skirts the western edge. Both of these river corridors provide good tree cover. The Stratford-upon-Avon Canal also passes diagonally across the area adding to overall landscape character and providing an important route for recreation.

The narrow lanes and strong hedgerow structure lend an enclosed and intimate feeling to this area that is particularly well perceived around Salter Street, south of Cheswick Green. This LCA is largely rural with active farms, 'horsiculture' and scattered settlement pattern, where in contrast urban influences prevail near the urban edge of Solihull. Sub-urban influences are also present in and around Tidbury Green.

This LCA provides a gateway from the southern fringe of the Solihull urban settlement to the more rural south. Despite the limited availability of public footpaths and bridleways across the area it remains accessible due to its geographical location close to Solihull and the other settlements of Dickens Heath, Cheswick Green and Hockley Heath.



**Photograph 2.1:**

The Stratford-upon-Avon Canal passes diagonally through the area and borders the northern edge of Dickens Heath.

**Table 2: Key Characteristics of LCA 2 - Southern Countryside**

Component	Characteristics
<b>Topography</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undulating landform ranging from 130m to 150m AOD.</li> </ul>
<b>Geology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undifferentiated Triassic Rocks - Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone.</li> <li>River Blythe Oxbow, north of Winterton Farm is a Regionally Important Geological Site.</li> </ul>
<b>Soils</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slowly permeable clayey soils with impeded drainage.</li> </ul>
<b>Drainage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The River Blythe along with its tributaries, including stream and field drains.</li> <li>River Cole skirts along the western edge and The Stratford-upon-Avon Canal passes diagonally through the area.</li> </ul>
<b>Land Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predominantly pastureland with some residential settlements, sports fields and a golf course.</li> </ul>
<b>Vegetation Cover</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong hedgerow boundary structure (with mature oaks).</li> <li>Woodland including ancient woodland.</li> <li>Good tree cover along the Blythe and Cole river corridors.</li> </ul>
<b>Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Main settlements of Dickens Heath, Cheswick Green, Hockley Heath and Tidbury Green with the smaller settlements and hamlets including Ilshaw Heath, Earlswood and Whitlock's End.</li> <li>Scattered farmstead settlement and ancient woodland.</li> </ul>
<b>Historic Value</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several listed buildings most of them being concentrated near Dickens Heath and Cheswick Green.</li> <li>Engine House, though not listed, is a historic building of local note.</li> </ul>
<b>Accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several roads and footpaths within this area connecting the settlements to each other and to Solihull in the north.</li> <li>The M42 divides the LCA into two parts.</li> <li>Recreational tow path along the Stratford-upon-Avon canal.</li> </ul>
<b>Visual Dynamic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Downward and horizontal views that are framed and wide. Some long views out to the landscape further south outside of the borough boundary.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong hedgerow boundary structure (with mature oaks).</li> <li>Woodland including designated ancient woodland.</li> <li>Irregular field patterns that area generally well enclosed.</li> <li>Narrow street structure providing an intimate feeling.</li> <li>Several listed buildings and Engine House.</li> <li>Stratford-upon-Avon canal and River Blythe.</li> <li>Numerous local wildlife sites and local nature reserves.</li> </ul>

## Sensitivities and Pressures:

- Neglect and potential loss of tree cover through new development.
- Neglect of woodland management would decrease the long-term tree cover.
- Decline in frequency of hedgerow trees due to neglect and lack of replacement.
- Increased pressure for access to open countryside and for development close to the urban edge of Solihull and Dickens Heath would impact upon rural character. The existing impacts of encroachment can be seen along Dickens Heath Road when leaving Solihull towards Tidbury Green.
- Pressure of coalescence between settlements, particularly evident between Tidbury Green and Dickens Heath.
- The landscape around Salter Street contains many scattered buildings and has limited capacity to accept additional built development without coalescence.
- Maintenance of public rights of way, which are few in number.
- Limited footpath network close to urban edge places walkers on narrow and dangerous roads.
- Pressure for new housing in this attractive commuter area due to easy access to Solihull and the M42 corridor. Limited capacity to accept development without impact upon character. Pressure particularly around the M42 due to accessibility is likely to continue along with pressures for motorway services.
- Overgrazing by animals can give the appearance of over use and impacts upon biodiversity. Inappropriate fencing also impacts on rural character.
- Proximity of urban areas and influence upon River Blythe and River Cole corridors.
- Potential detractor of farmstead sprawl with new large modern buildings.
- Noise from M42 corridor impacts upon tranquillity of area to south at Hockley Heath and Kineton Lane.
- Pressure for expansion of Blythe Valley Park.



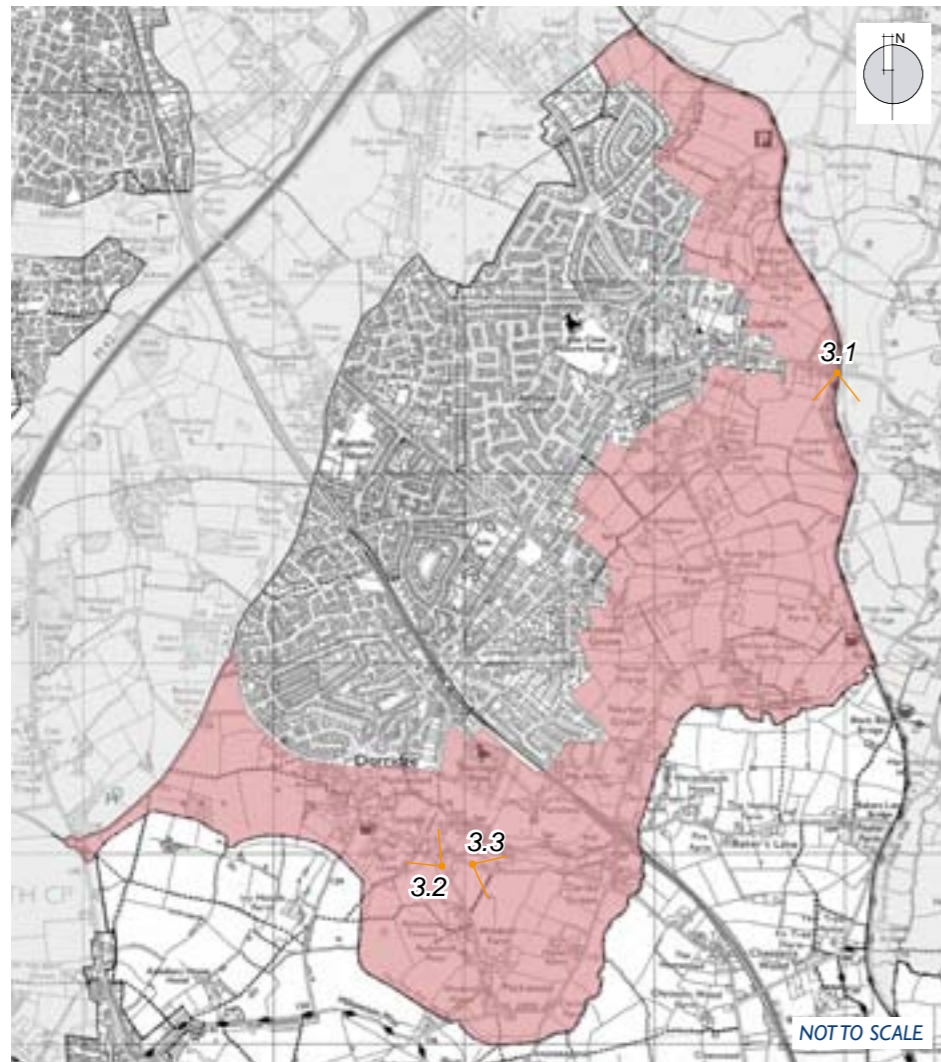
**Photograph 2.2:**

The M42 motorway segregates this area into two parts and is a barrier to movement.



**Photograph 2.3:**

Main settlements have a great influence on the character of the area acting as a gateway between the urban southern fringe of Solihull and the more rural south. Ribbon development at Tidbury Green brings urban characteristics into the village's rural environs.



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## Description:

This area covers approximately 5.8km<sup>2</sup> and includes the urban fringes of Knowle and Dorridge and rural areas to the south and east of the settlement. The LCA is contained by the Grand Union Canal which skirts along the east boundary of the area, Dorridge urban edge and Box Trees Road to the south-west of the area.

The land gently slopes down from west to east eventually falling towards the River Blythe in LCA 4. Purnell Brook, Cuttle Brook and Canal Feeder and their associated springs drain the area. These watercourses are well wooded and provide a distinctive characteristic within the landscape, specifically to the south of the LCA, which is perceived as being more enclosed and intimate.

Small blocks of woodland are scattered across the area, a number of these are ancient woodlands, Local Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves. The woodlands are a valuable asset and combined with the winding lanes, mature hedgerow trees and ditches/watercourses running across the fields they provide a rich complexity and strong structure to the landscape, which is a key characteristic of the area.

This area, being in close proximity to Knowle and Dorridge, shows signs of urban influence especially within the northern extent of the LCA on the approaches to the settlement of Knowle. A large proportion of the character area remains unspoilt and is distinctively rural in character with pastoral fields despite the close proximity of the urban edge. Although much of the historic environment has been developed over the years, remnants of the past are evident in the names of places. Grimshaw Hall provides a historical connection and is of great heritage value to the landscape character of the area.

The area provides a gateway to the countryside from the southern and eastern fringes of Dorridge. Public footpaths and bridleways are present and assist in connecting the settlements to the major roads and the Grand Union Canal Walk to the east.

Table 3: Key Characteristics of LCA 3 - Knowle & Dorridge Fringe

Component	Characteristics
Topography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The land gently slopes downwards from west to east from a high point of 130m to a low of 110m AOD.</li> </ul>
Geology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bed rock Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) - Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone.</li> </ul>
Soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slowly permeable clayey soils, seasonally wet with impeded drainage.</li> </ul>
Drainage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purnell Brook, Cuttle Brook and Canal Feeder along with associated springs.</li> <li>Grand Union Canal forms the eastern boundary.</li> </ul>
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land use is varied with some residential, few individual farmsteads, horsiculture, parkland and agriculture.</li> </ul>
Vegetation Cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well wooded water corridors dominated with willow trees.</li> <li>Pockets of woodland are scattered across the area.</li> <li>Bracken hedge banks are present within the southern part</li> </ul>
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No major settlement being adjacent to Knowle and Dorridge.</li> <li>Urban influences are evident including communication masts, farm conversions and other large residential properties</li> </ul>
Historic Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grimshaw Hall, a 16th century manor, is a Grade I listed building in the north.</li> <li>Remnants of small scale industrial past.</li> <li>This area adjoins Knowle Conservation Area which lies to the immediate west.</li> </ul>
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single track roads and winding lanes are characteristic of the area.</li> <li>Short sections of PRoW connect the settlements to the major roads and to the countryside.</li> <li>Grand Union Canal Walk (long distance trail) is an important recreational route.</li> </ul>
Visual Dynamic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The general visibility in this area is contained, short distance and low level.</li> </ul>
Key Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No major settlements, although influenced by Knowle and Dorridge.</li> <li>Pastoral fields.</li> <li>Grimshaw Hall.</li> <li>Darley Brook Meadows – a Local Wildlife Site.</li> <li>Grand Union Canal and other water courses.</li> <li>Narrow and winding street structure like Mill Pool Lane.</li> </ul>



Photograph 3.1:

Knowle Hall Wharf, part of the Grand Union Canal, contains the eastern boundary of the LCA. The towpath is part of a long distance trail.

## Sensitivities and Pressures:

- Increased pressure for access to open countryside and for development close to the urban edge of Dorridge would impact upon rural character. The existing impacts of encroachment are evident at the edge of Knowle.
- Desire for new housing in this attractive commuter area due to easy access to Solihull and the M42 corridor. Limited capacity of the motorway corridor to accept development without impact upon character.
- Pressure for conversion of farm buildings into residences.
- Neglect of field barns and vernacular buildings is impacting upon landscape character.
- Limited footpath network close to urban edge places walkers on narrow and dangerous roads.
- Overgrazing of land by horses gives the appearance of over use and impacts upon biodiversity. Inappropriate fencing also impacts on rural character.
- The landscape to the south and around Cuttle Brook contains many scattered buildings and has limited capacity to accept additional built development without detriment to landscape character through coalescence.



Photograph 3.2:

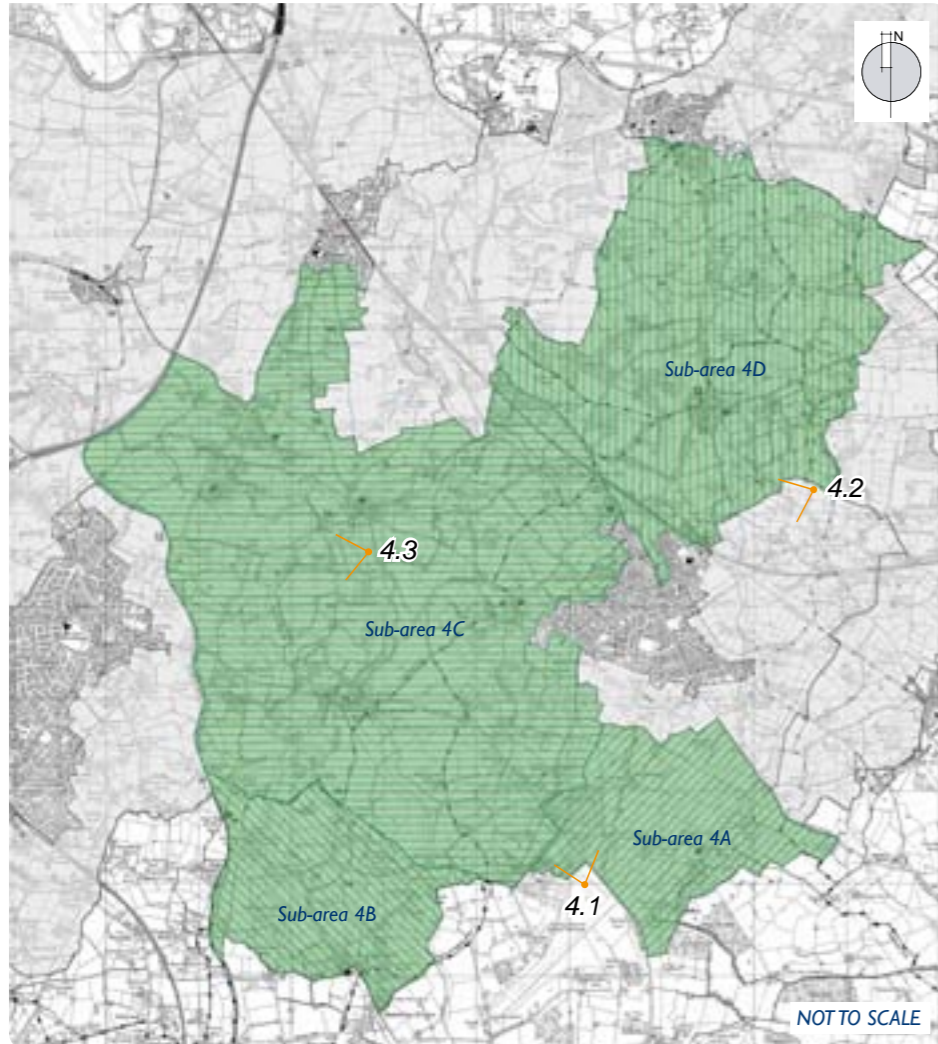
Tree cover is present in hedgerows and pockets of woodland, particularly in the south of the area.



Photograph 3.3:

There is a network of narrow, winding rural lanes often well enclosed by tall hedgerows and mature trees, such as at Mill Pool Lane.





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## Description:

This is a large area covering approximately 42km<sup>2</sup> and is within the rural heartland of Solihull. The area has been sub-divided into four sub-areas due to the scale of the LCA and subtle variations of characteristics within it. The sub-areas 4A, 4B, 4C and 4D are presented within the accompanying document Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment.

LCA 4 is an active rural agricultural landscape with arable and pastoral fields that support animal grazing.

Historically important nucleated settlements centred around road junctions are noticeable such as Temple Balsall and Berkswell. Other linear development such as Chadwick End and Barston are among the many smaller settlements prevalent in the wider countryside. Watercourses include the River Blythe SSSI, which forms an important feature within the area. This LCA is remote from larger areas of population giving a generally tranquil and unspoilt open character to the landscape.

The north-eastern extent of the character area adjoining LCA 8 is safeguarded as a mineral search area and the north-eastern and south-eastern extent of the LCA are also safeguarded as an area for search for coal. Mid-distance views with an open character and generally with a wooded backdrop are commonly experienced across this character area. The Conservation Areas play an important role within this LCA and their wider settings as an important characteristic that should be protected. The rural character of this LCA is a key element that requires protection and enhancement.

Table 4: Key Characteristics of LCA 4 - Rural Centre

Component	Characteristics
Topography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gentle valley landform centred on River Blythe, ranging from 90m to 140m AOD.</li> </ul>
Geology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) - Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone. Wilmcote Limestone and Saltford Shale Member north of Knowle. Warwickshire Group of Siltstone and Sandstone with Subordinate Mudstone solid geology covers the north-eastern extent of LCA.</li> </ul>
Soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The central section comprises permeable alluvial and glacial clays, sand and gravel deposits, naturally wet soils with high groundwater. The western section comprises freely draining sands and gravels.</li> </ul>
Drainage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The River Blythe and tributaries, Cuttle Brook, Long Brook and several pools, ditches and springs.</li> <li>The Grand Union Canal forms the western boundary of the LCA.</li> </ul>
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predominantly agriculture (mix of arable and pastoral) with scattered residential development and rural farm businesses.</li> </ul>
Vegetation Cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Field boundary hedgerows of varying condition. Dense hedgerows often contain mature oaks and bracken. Some individual field trees.</li> <li>Pockets of woodland and plantation, Frogmore Wood is prominent. Some veteran trees near historic settlements.</li> <li>Well vegetated river corridor.</li> </ul>
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Main settlements of Temple Balsall and Berkswell with smaller settlements of Walsal End and Barston.</li> <li>Smaller linear settlements including Chadwick End and Fen End, and scattered farmsteads.</li> </ul>
Historic Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four Conservation Areas - Temple Balsall, Berkswell, Barston and Walsal End.</li> <li>Four Scheduled Monuments including the Preceptory at Temple Balsall.</li> <li>Historic farmstead, moated sites, listed buildings throughout the LCA.</li> <li>The Arden landscape, ancient woodland, and mature hedgerows.</li> </ul>
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some major roads including the A4141, A452 and M42. Minor roads connect various smaller settlements.</li> <li>Mainline railway crosses the LCA towards the north east.</li> <li>Several public footpaths and bridleways. There are three long distance trails: Heart of England Way, Millennium Way and Coventry Way. The Grand Union Canal Walk forms the western boundary.</li> </ul>
Visual Dynamic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Views are often contained and narrow within historic settlements, but wider and longer within the rural, agricultural environs.</li> </ul>
Key Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predominantly agricultural land use.</li> <li>River Blythe (SSSI) and associated Blythe valley.</li> <li>Fields boundary hedgerows of varying condition, some only post and rail fencing, some tall and dense with mature oaks.</li> <li>Individual mature trees within fields are characteristic.</li> <li>The presence of Conservation Areas creates a distinct character with attractive historic buildings and intimate settings.</li> <li>Aside from the major roads, minor roads are generally narrow, winding and often enclosed by mature hedgerows.</li> </ul>

## Sensitivities and Pressures:

- Neglect and potential loss of woodland.
- Pressure for development close to the edge of Balsall Common.
- Maintenance of public rights of way.
- Loss of biodiversity through intensive farming and land management.
- Overgrazing and trampling of land by horses which give the appearance of over use degrade landscape and impacts upon biodiversity. Inappropriate fencing also impacts on rural character.
- Proximity of urban areas and their influence upon the River Blythe Corridor.
- Potential of farmstead sprawl with new large modern buildings that detract from the area.
- Noise from M42 corridor in the north west of the area affects the tranquility.



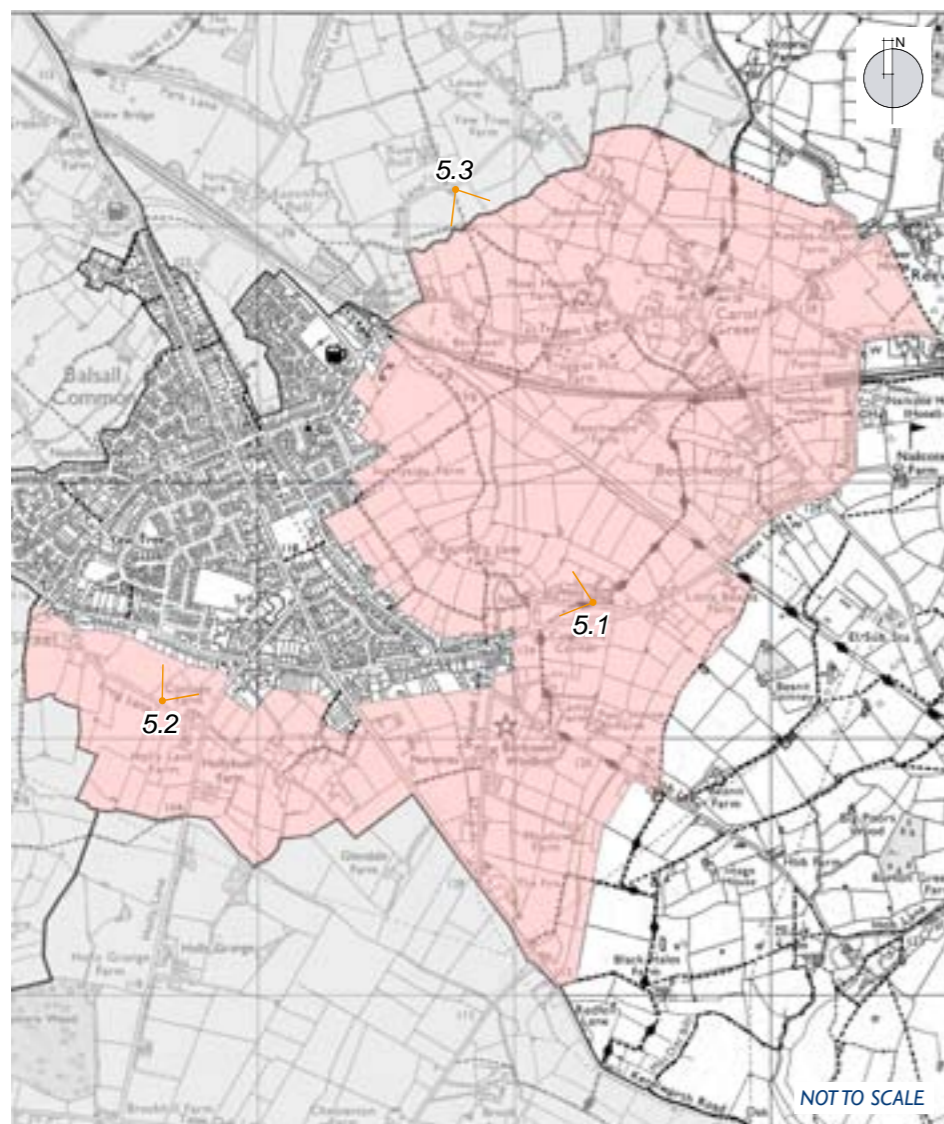
**Photograph 4.1:**  
Whilst trees are frequently a feature of field boundaries, hedgerows are often low and sparse.



**Photograph 4.2:**  
Land use is predominantly agricultural, generally with medium to large sized fields and a variable pattern. Electricity pylons are visible particularly to southern and western areas.



**Photograph 4.3:**  
Historic settlements have a distinctively intimate and well conserved feel. There are many attractive historic buildings within Conservation Areas and scattered throughout the rural landscape.



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## Description:

This area is generally flat extending to areas of undulating landscape towards the northern extent of the LCA. The area is located to the west of Balsall Common and spans just under 4.5km<sup>2</sup>.

Being in close proximity to Balsall Common the area therefore is heavily influenced by the settlement bringing in strong elements of suburbia. This is particularly noticeable around Catchems Corner and Carol Green introducing manicured lanes, close mown grass verges, footways and overhead cables. The strong influence of Balsall Common on the rural character of the area has led to the loss of the definitive edge between the urban area and countryside beyond.

Strong tree cover along streets and isolated trees within field boundaries as part of hedgerows create a strong 'sense of place' that adds to the distinctiveness of the area. Even in areas of built development where the rural aspect has been denuded, the tree structure has been retained and remains a dominant influence.

The landform along with the strong hedgerow structure creates short-distance views that are contained within the LCA. The area is easily accessible via a network of roads, footpaths and long distance trails including the Millennium Walk, Coventry Way and Kenilworth Greenway cycle path, which form key recreational routes through the area. The railway line running east to west to Coventry also passes across the character area.

Table 5: Key Characteristics of LCA 5 - Balsall Common Eastern Fringe

Component	Characteristics
Topography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gently undulating landform between 110m and 130m tending to be largely flat in the southern area.</li> </ul>
Geology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Majority siltstone and sandstone with subordinate mudstone solid geology and undifferentiated Triassic rocks (mudstone, siltstone and sandstone solid geology)</li> </ul>
Soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Majority slowly permeable clayey soils with varying slightly impeded or impeded drainage</li> </ul>
Drainage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tributaries of the River Blythe, other springs and pools.</li> <li>Agricultural field ditches also form part of the drainage pattern.</li> </ul>
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mostly managed as arable land with smaller grass fields.</li> <li>Clustered residential settlements.</li> </ul>
Vegetation Cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arable and some pastoral fields</li> <li>Mature hedgerow trees (oak and ash are the dominant species) and established hedgerows.</li> <li>Two veteran trees.</li> </ul>
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A cluster of small settlements at Carol Green and linear development at Catchems Corner are the main settlements outside of Balsall Common.</li> <li>A number of farmsteads, communications masts and electricity pylons are present.</li> </ul>
Historic Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A number of listed buildings are present predominantly located within Carol Green.</li> <li>Several old cottages, though not designated, are of local importance around Catchems Corner.</li> <li>The fields are historic, most likely post-medieval enclosed fields that may have medieval origins.</li> </ul>
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several roads and a railway line run through the area connecting to the wider landscape.</li> <li>A number of Public Rights of Way including long distance trails – Millennium Way and Coventry Way traverse the area.</li> <li>The disused railway line is now an active cycle path known locally as Kenilworth Greenway which connects to the National Cycle Network 523.</li> </ul>
Visual Dynamic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The views are generally short distance, contained, shallow and in a horizontal orientation.</li> </ul>
Key Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arable land with irregular historic field pattern.</li> <li>Established hedgerows.</li> <li>Mature trees (oak and ash) including two veteran trees.</li> <li>Communications mast and electricity pylons are detracting features.</li> <li>Suburban influences within a rural setting.</li> <li>Long distance trails.</li> <li>Berkswell Windmill.</li> </ul>

## Sensitivities and Pressures:

- Possible increased pressure for housing and urbanisation from edge of Balsall Common, Carol Green and Catchems Corner may impact upon rural character.
- Neglect and potential loss of veteran trees and ancient woodland associated with development pressure.
- The landscape contains many scattered buildings and has limited capacity to accept additional built development without causing detrimental coalescence.
- Potential of farmstead sprawl with new large modern buildings and farm diversification detracting from the area. Conversion of field barns and vernacular buildings is also impacting upon landscape character.
- Almost the entire LCA excepting the south-western area is mineral safeguarded for coal, which could have considerable impact upon the landscape character.
- Pressure from the proposed HS2 route.



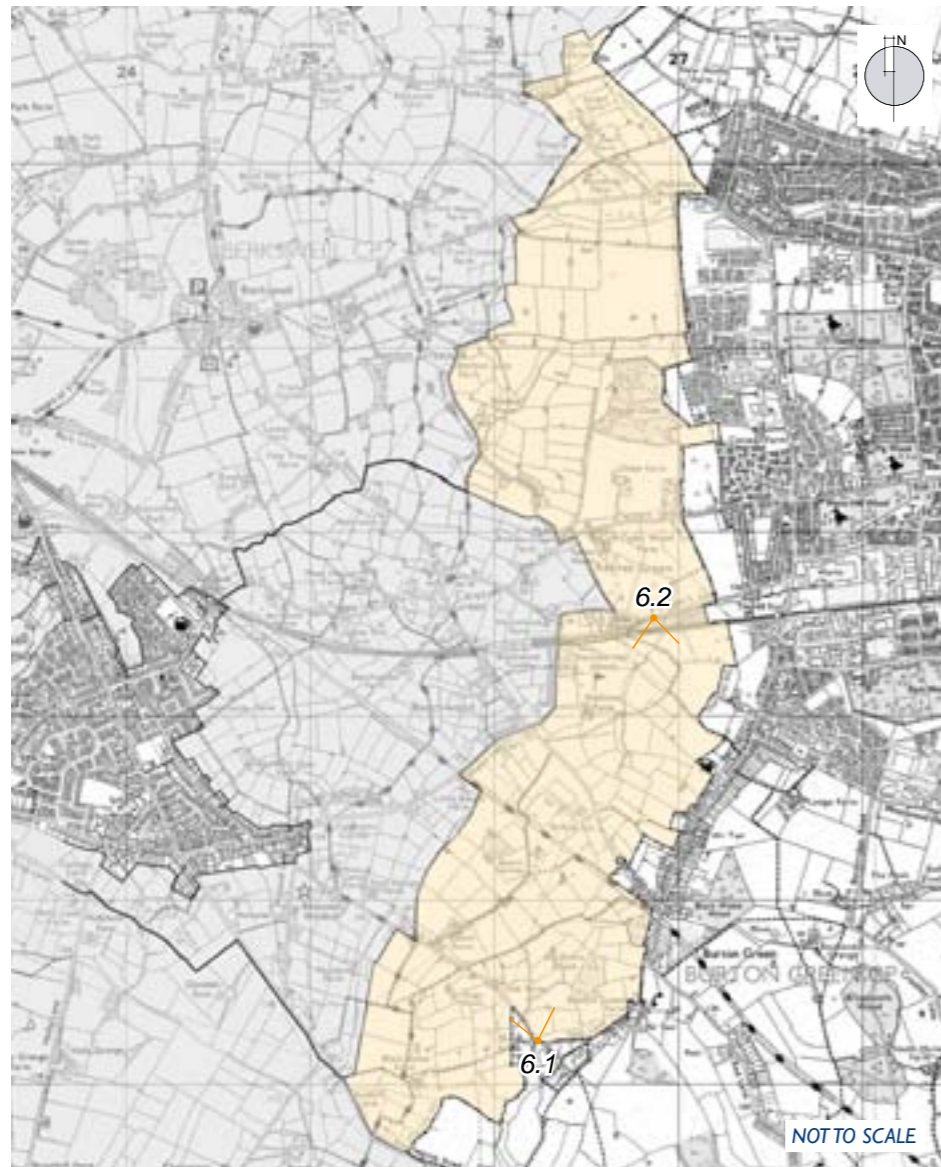
**Photograph 5.1:**  
Woodland cover is largely absent with trees being limited to hedgerows and streets, particularly at the urban edge of Balsall Common.



**Photograph 5.2:**  
In places, agricultural fields have given way to recreational purposes at settlement edges, urbanising the once rural setting.



**Photograph 5.3:**  
The historic irregular field pattern is evident in some locations. Electricity pylons conspicuously cross the gently undulating landscape, detracting from the rural view.



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## Description:

This undulating area lies at the easternmost extent of the Borough where it adjoins the city of Coventry. The LCA spans just over 5.5km<sup>2</sup>.

Although close to the urban edge, this character area retains a strong sense of rural identity that provides a countryside buffer between Balsall Common and Coventry. The LCA provides an attractive gateway to the countryside from the urban edge, which contains long distance trails, recreational cycle paths and a good footpath and bridleway network.

Fields are larger and more regular to the north of the area in contrast to the medium to small scale and irregular field pattern in the southern extent of the LCA. Fields are mostly bound by hedgerows of various condition, the southern area having a stronger hedgerow structure with oak and ash present within them. Hedgerows along roadsides are generally high trimmed with tall overhanging trees.

Small copses and the landform break down views across the area. Views of the urban edge towards Coventry are noticeable in certain locations but are generally medium distance.

Settlement is sparse and farmstead diversification is noticeable throughout the area. Linear settlements have developed along some arterial roads specifically at Duggins Lane and Benton Green Lane. The Berkswell substation within the central extent of the character area is a partial detractor and electricity pylons and overhead cables are a constant feature within the landscape.

Table 6: Key Characteristics of LCA 6 - Eastern Fringe

Component	Characteristics
Topography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undulating landform between 120m and 140m.</li> </ul>
Geology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The northern area comprises Warwickshire Group (Siltstone and Sandstone with Subordinate Mudstone solid geology).</li> <li>The southern LCA comprises undifferentiated Triassic Rocks (Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone solid geology).</li> </ul>
Soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slow permeable clayey soils with slightly impeded drainage</li> </ul>
Drainage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agricultural field ditches supplemented with several pools, some springs and a reservoir at Victoria Farm.</li> </ul>
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The land is predominantly arable fields interspersed with deciduous woodland and coniferous plantations. This also includes a golf course as part of a hotel.</li> </ul>
Vegetation Cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Woodland cover is formed of plantation blocks and deciduous woodland, scattered across the area.</li> <li>Strong tree cover including hedgerows, street trees and the occasional standalone trees within fields.</li> </ul>
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Largely comprises converted farms and smaller ribbon developments are also noticeable particularly along Duggins Lane and Benton Green Lane</li> <li>Electrical sub-station within the central part of the area.</li> <li>Electricity pylons, telegraph poles and wires are the main vertical elements in the area. Other vertical elements include a water tower near Duggins Lane.</li> </ul>
Historic Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three listed buildings in this LCA. Nailcote Hall is a Grade II listed late 16th century timber frame and red brick house, now a hotel and golf course.</li> </ul>
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A number of Public Rights of Way including long distance trails – Millennium Way and Coventry Way traverse the area.</li> <li>The Birmingham to Coventry railway line and numerous arterial roads from Coventry to Solihull cross this LCA, however connectivity within the LCA remains poor as most of these roads runs east to west with no connection in the north to south direction.</li> <li>An active cycle path known locally as Kenilworth Greenway is on the disused old railway line is a key recreational route.</li> </ul>
Visual Dynamic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small copses and the landform break down views across the LCA.</li> <li>Generally, views are medium distance, fragmented and in a horizontal orientation in this area.</li> <li>Views of the urban edge at Coventry are noticeable in certain areas.</li> </ul>
Key Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arable land.</li> <li>Long distance trails..</li> <li>Electricity pylons, telegraph poles and wires.</li> <li>Mature hedgerow trees.</li> <li>Small copses across the area.</li> <li>Rural setting with no main settlements.</li> </ul>

## Sensitivities and Pressures:

- Neglect of woodland management would decrease the long-term sustainability of tree cover in this characteristically wooded area.
- Views of business parks and their associated facilities detract from the positive rural attributes of this area.
- Possible increased pressure for access to open countryside from the edge of Coventry and Balsall Common may impact upon the rural character of the area.
- Decline in frequency of hedgerow trees due to neglect and lack of replacement.
- The southern half of the area plays an important role in separating Balsall Common from Coventry and is sensitive to development which would result in coalescence.
- Pressure for new housing in the attractive countryside due to easy access to Coventry, increasing pressure on the arterial roads. Limited capacity of the area to accept development without impact upon character.
- Potential of farmstead sprawl with new large modern buildings that detract from the area.
- This area is a mineral safeguarded area for coal, which would have considerable impact upon landscape character.



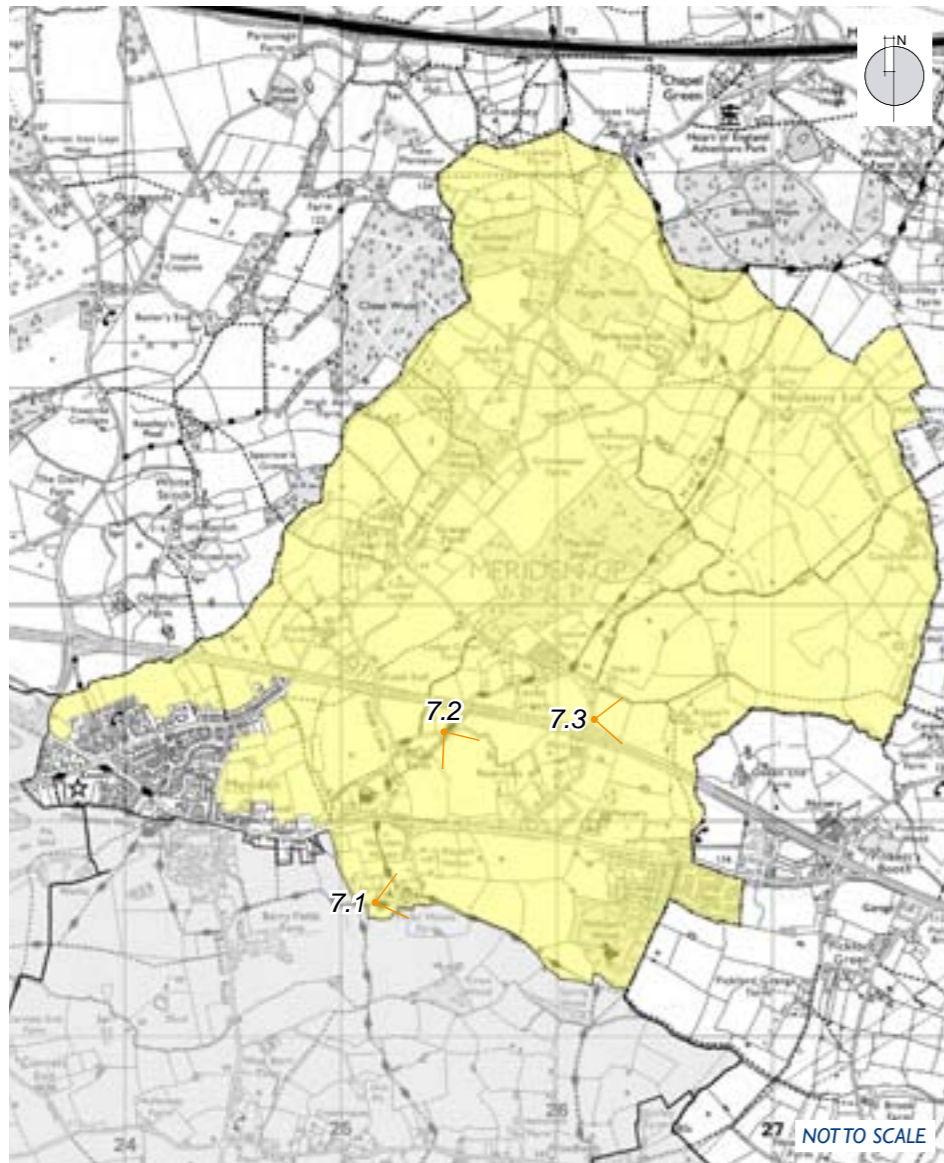
Photograph 6.1:

Undulating landform of agriculture, woodland/ plantation blocks and numerous arterial roads linking Solihull and Coventry which follow the landscape pattern.



Photograph 6.2:

Medium to large sized arable fields interspersed with deciduous woodland and a strong contingent of mature trees within hedgerows. Electricity pylons and telegraph poles are prevalent, being adjacent to the western fringes of Coventry. Settlement within the LCA largely comprises converted farms and smaller ribbon development such as along Duggin's Way.



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## Description:

This LCA covers an area of 8.15km<sup>2</sup> in the north east of the Borough, to the east of the village of Meriden. The landform is generally undulating and higher than the neighbouring character areas, allowing long views out to both the cities of Coventry and Birmingham.

Land use in the area is predominantly agricultural with some residential interspersed with large areas covered by woodland. Horsiculture is also evident within this LCA with the presence of riding schools that serve the high demand for recreation in the area. Strong hedgerow structure and narrow roads are characteristic with high hedgerows bordering single track lanes. Good examples of green lanes can be found in the area such as Walsh Lane to the south-west of the area. The extensive woodland cover forms the backdrop of most views across the area and is an important landscape feature.

This area contains the Meriden Hill Conservation Area, the setting of which is particularly distinct and plays an important role in contributing to the wider character of the surrounding countryside. This area is relatively quieter than other northern parts of the Borough, however it isn't exempt from some road noise as the A45 traverses the area.

The main settlements in the area are the eastern edge of Meriden and Millisons Wood. A static caravan park is also present at Eaves Green in addition to a number of individual farmsteads that have not undergone residential conversion. Majority of the character area, with the exception of the two fields at the south-western edge, is designated as a mineral safeguard area for coal. A number of public footpaths including the long distance trails such the Heart of England and Coventry Way are present within this character area.

Table 7: Key Characteristics of LCA 7 - Northern Upland

Component	Characteristics
Topography	• Upland area forming a plateau ranging from 180m to 110m AOD.
Geology	• Warwickshire Group - Siltstone and Sandstone with Subordinate Mudstone solid geology.
Soils	• Slowly permeable clayey soils with slightly impeded drainage.
Drainage	• Pickford Brook and numerous field ponds.
Land Use	• Predominantly agricultural land with extensive woodland blocks with the largest called Meriden Shafts. • Some residential settlement including a static caravan park.
Vegetation Cover	• Extensive woodland cover including Millisons Wood, an ancient woodland. • Strong hedgerows forming field boundaries. • High bracken hedgerows are frequent along single road tracks.
Development	• Main settlements in the area are the eastern edge of Meriden and Millisons Wood. • A static caravan park settlement is also present at Eaves Green.
Historic Value	• Meriden Hill is a Conservation Area with numerous listed buildings. • The Moated site at Marlbrook Hall Farm and Churchyard Cross in St Laurence's are both Scheduled Monuments.
Accessibility	• The A45 cuts across the area from east to west, north of Meriden. • Winding single track roads. • A number of public footpaths including long distance trails Heart of England and Coventry Way are present within this area.
Visual Dynamic	• The woodlands dominate the skyline. • Generally, views are long to medium distance that are elevated, fragmented and contained, shallow and in a horizontal orientation.
Key Features	• Meriden Hill is a Conservation Area. • Meriden Green is a Conservation Area. • The setting of the area around Church Farm. • Extensive woodland cover, forming the general visual background in this area. • Three local wildlife sites, local nature reserve and ancient woodland. • Narrow single track roads with high bracken hedgerows. • Numerous public footpaths including long distance trails. • Views to Coventry and Birmingham are a feature within this area. • Tranquil setting compared to the rest of the borough. • Static caravan park present at Eaves Green is a detracting visual feature.

## Sensitivities and Pressures:

- Neglect and potential loss of ancient woodland would impact the character of the area.
- The straight edges of the A45 corridor to the north of the LCA are insensitive to the irregular field pattern of the area.
- The landscape contains many scattered buildings and has limited capacity to accept additional built development without detrimental coalescence.
- Pressure for barn conversions, increasing domestic influence, development of modern farm buildings and additional farm dwellings are evident in this area.
- Loss of biodiversity through intensive farming and land management.
- Decline in frequency of hedgerow trees due to neglect and lack of replacement.
- Pressure for mineral search may have impact upon the landscape character.



Photograph 7.1:

The setting of Church Farm and St Laurence Church is an important part of the area's historic character.



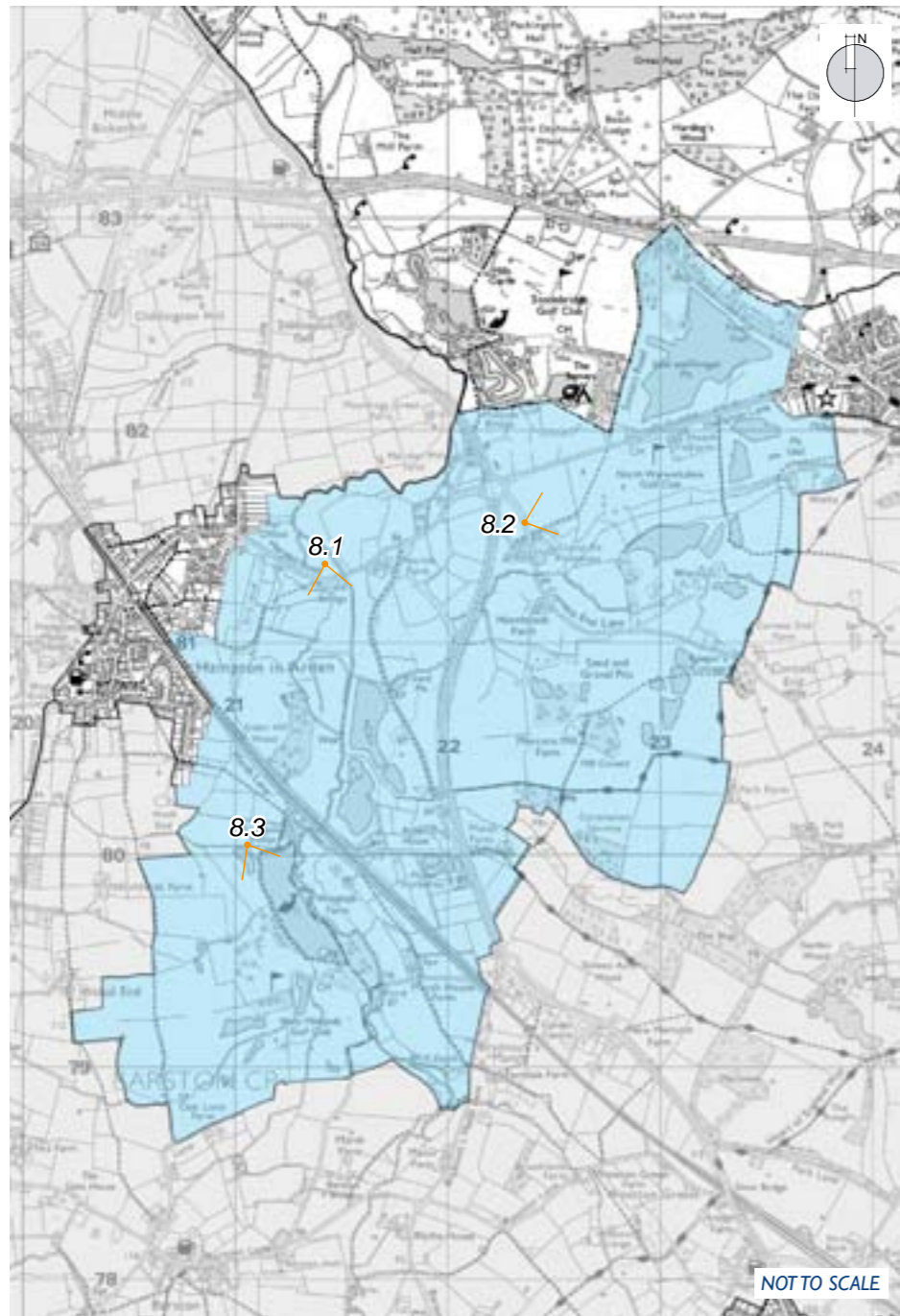
Photograph 7.2:

The agricultural landscape comprises medium to large scale fields of an irregular pattern. Weak hedgerow structure is common despite a good contingent of mature trees.



Photograph 7.3:

The area is predominantly agricultural with woodland blocks and field boundary trees. From Showell Lane there are long distance views towards Coventry. Elsewhere within the LCA, Birmingham can be seen on the distant horizon.



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## Description:

This is an area covering approximately 7km<sup>2</sup> of active mineral extraction with some restoration to recreational and agricultural use.

Mineral extraction being a key land use in this area is a strong detracting element within the landscape. Most of the mineral workings are located towards the northern extent of the area where they appear incongruous with the overriding rural character of the area. A number of golf courses exist within the area along with lakes for angling, which provide distinct areas of recreation serving the urban areas of Solihull. The River Blythe flows through this character area and the landform is generally flat with an open meadow landscape prevailing along the river corridor. Tree cover is extensive due to the scattered woodland blocks and copses strewn across the area and together these form positive features within the lower Blythe river valley.

The A452 is a major arterial road that segregates the area into eastern and western land parcels with limited connectivity between. The Birmingham to Coventry railway line also passes through the area and divides the landscape.

Table 8: Key Characteristics of LCA 8 - Blythe Lowland

Component	Characteristics
Topography	• Flat landform to gently undulating to the east ranging from 90m to 110m AOD.
Geology	• Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) - Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone solid geology.
Soils	• Largely permeable alluvial and glacial clays, sand and gravel deposits, naturally wet soils with high groundwater.
Drainage	• River Blythe with associated network of drainage ditches, plus several large water bodies mostly associated with mineral extraction and recreational use.
Land Use	• Varied land use with large parts being used for mineral extraction (sand and gravel pits), golf courses and some agricultural land the fields of which are encircled by hedgerows.
Vegetation Cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The site is characterised by woodlands, hedgerows, arable fields, bracken along the roadside verge and open river meadows.</li> <li>• The majority of trees are located within pockets of woodland or within hedgerows. However, some standalone trees are also present within the fields.</li> </ul>
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The area is largely industrial and recreational with scattered farmsteads.</li> <li>• No main settlements are present however, it is at the edge of two settlements – Hampton in Arden to the west and Meriden to the north-east.</li> </ul>
Historic Value	• Packhorse Bridge, a Scheduled Monument, located south of the train tracks near Marsh Lane which provides evidence of historic droving routes.
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two major transport corridor runs through the LCA, the Birmingham to Coventry railway line and the A452 of which transects the area north to south.</li> <li>• Much of the area remains inaccessible with limited number of public footpaths with most of these are concentrated in the southern section. Millennium Way, a long distance trail, forms part of the western border of the character area.</li> </ul>
Visual Dynamic	• The visibility in this area usually consists of medium to short distance views that are medium level, framed and wide, deep and in a horizontal orientation.
Key Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scattered woodland blocks and copses.</li> <li>• Packhorse Bridge – a Scheduled Monument.</li> <li>• River Blythe (SSSI) with its open river meadows including Patrick Farm Meadow.</li> <li>• Mineral extraction (sand and gravel pits) with resulting lakes and ponds.</li> <li>• Recreational use with golf courses and angling lakes.</li> <li>• Long distance trail - Millennium Way.</li> </ul>

## Sensitivities and Pressures:

- Neglect of woodland management will decrease the long-term sustainability of tree cover in this characteristically wooded area.
- Public Rights of Way provide crucial access to the rural countryside. Maintenance of these routes is critical to retain good connections across the area.
- The area is an active mineral extraction zone and further areas of search for extraction may have impact upon the landscape character.
- Pressure exists from the proposed HS2 route.



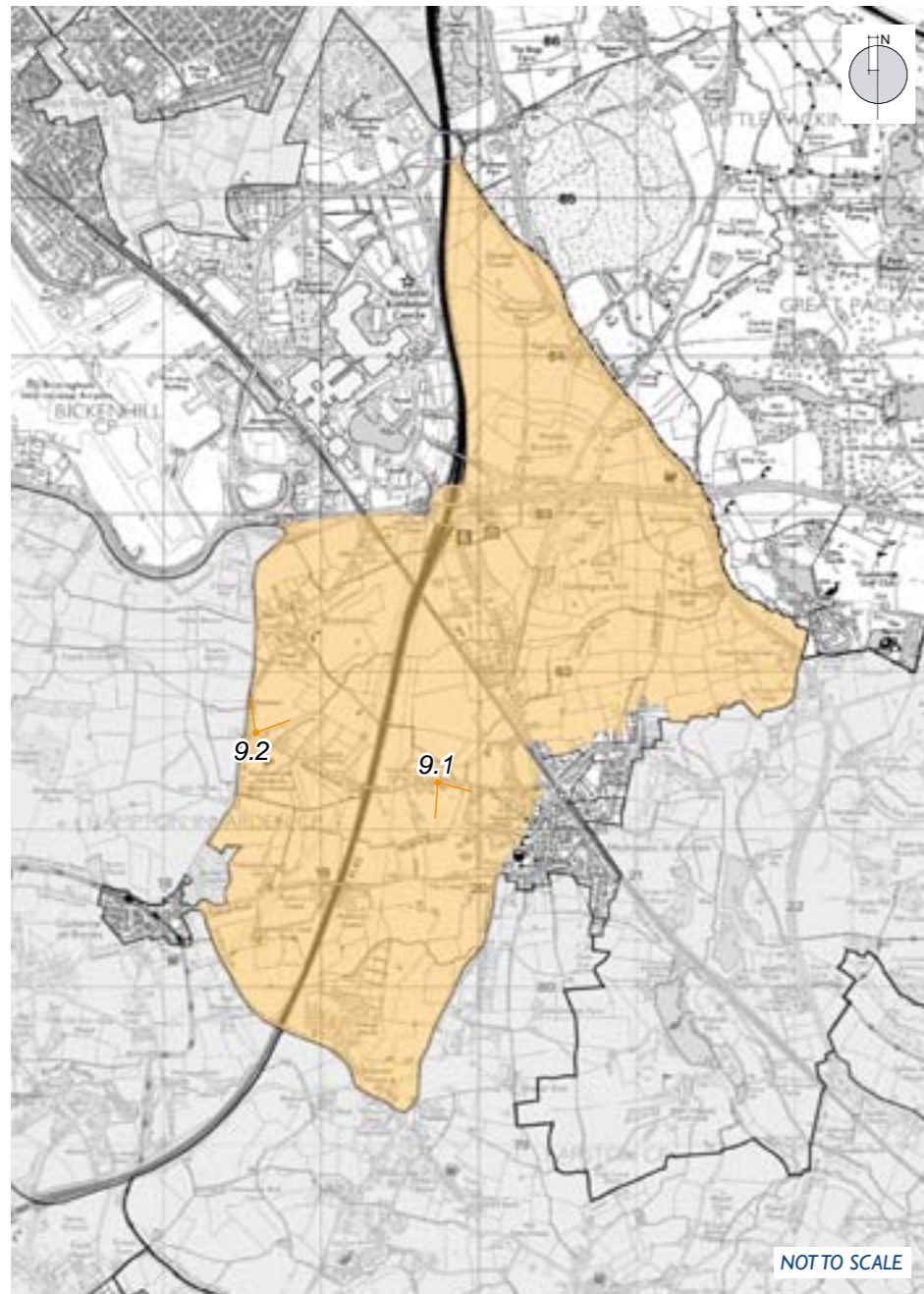
**Photograph 8.1:**  
Local Wildlife Sites are focussed on wetland habitats such as Patrick Farm Meadow on the River Blythe.



**Photograph 8.2:**  
Active mineral extraction sites are frequent within this LCA and a strong detracting feature of the landscape.



**Photograph 8.3:**  
Large water bodies in the form of angling lakes are a feature, restored from former mineral extraction sites.



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## Description:

This is an undulating area, extending to just under 10km<sup>2</sup>. There is an overall dominance of manmade structures such as road, pylons, railway lines, mineral extractions, linear developments and other industrial uses.

This area is characterised by the varied land use and diverse landscape pattern with an eclectic mix of historical elements, agricultural fields, residential development, industrial sites, waterways and transport infrastructure. Hampton Manor with its associated woodland cover and parkland features is a key feature within this area, which provides a distinctive landscape setting to the western edge of Hampton in Arden.

The area to the north of East Way is a mineral safeguarded area with current extractions taking place. Despite the presence of the mineral industry, the central extent of the character area is distinctly rural by virtue of its farmland and Hampton Manor. The woodland associated with Hampton Manor and Shadow Brook is a distinctive feature and forms the backdrop in many views across the area. Road, rail and air traffic noise is noticeable in the area due to the strong presence of the transport corridor. There is a limited footpath network within the area and access to the countryside on foot from the urban areas is poor.

Table 9: Key Characteristics of LCA 9 - Motorway Corridor

Component	Characteristics
Topography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undulating landform ranging from 80m to 120m AOD.</li> </ul>
Geology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) - Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone solid geology</li> <li>Nursery Cottage Brickworks Jackson is recognised as a Regionally Important Geological Site.</li> </ul>
Soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slowly permeable clayey soils, seasonally wet with impeded drainage</li> </ul>
Drainage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hollywell Brook, Shadow Brook and tributaries of River Blythe along with some field ditches and smaller ponds.</li> </ul>
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Industrial use is present including mineral extraction and sewage works.</li> <li>Arable and pastoral fields form the majority of the remaining area with some linear developments and the National Motorcycle Museum.</li> </ul>
Vegetation Cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Woodlands (concentrated around Hampton Manor and the Shadow Brook corridor), hedgerows, arable fields and bracken along the roadside verge.</li> </ul>
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Settlements include Bickenhill and the area is also influenced by Hampton in Arden which is located adjacent to the eastern boundary.</li> <li>Transport corridor with major road and rail infrastructure.</li> <li>Electricity pylon lines are present to both to the east and west of the M42.</li> </ul>
Historic Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bickenhill conservation area is located here and is also adjoins the Hampton in Arden conservation area.</li> <li>St Peter's Church in Bickenhill, is a key feature and is a Grade I listed building.</li> </ul>
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The A45 is present to the north and the M42 runs through the central part of the LCA and forms the western boundary within the northern and southern section.</li> <li>There are limited Public Rights of Way within the area, with none being present to the north of the A45 and south of Shadowbrook.</li> </ul>
Visual Dynamic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The general visibility consists of long to medium distance views that are medium level, framed and wide, deep and in a downwards and horizontal orientation.</li> </ul>
Key Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>St Peter's Church, a Grade I listed building and Diddington Hall is a Grade II* listed building</li> <li>Pockets of deciduous and plantation woodland.</li> <li>Limited Public Rights of Way within the area.</li> <li>Open views across fields.</li> <li>Hampton Manor and associated parkland.</li> <li>Major transport links including the A45, M42 and a railway line.</li> </ul>

## Sensitivities and Pressures:

- Views of business parks and their associated infrastructure detract from the rural character of the area.
- The straight edges of the M42 fragment the landscape and forms an east west barrier to accessing the wider countryside.
- Possible increase pressure for access to open countryside from edge of Solihull may impact upon the rural character of the area.
- Limited recreation opportunities in the area. Public rights of way are absent within the areas to the north of Coventry Road and to the south of Solihull Road.
- Loss of biodiversity through intensive farming and land management.
- Pressure for new housing in this attractive commuter area close to Solihull and the M42 corridor.
- Noise from the railway line, Birmingham International Airport, M42 corridor and other major infrastructure impacts upon the tranquillity of the area.
- Future pressure from the proposed HS2 and associated interchange within the northern extent of the LCA.
- The northern extent of this area is safeguarded as an area for the search for mineral extraction, which may in the future change the landscape character.



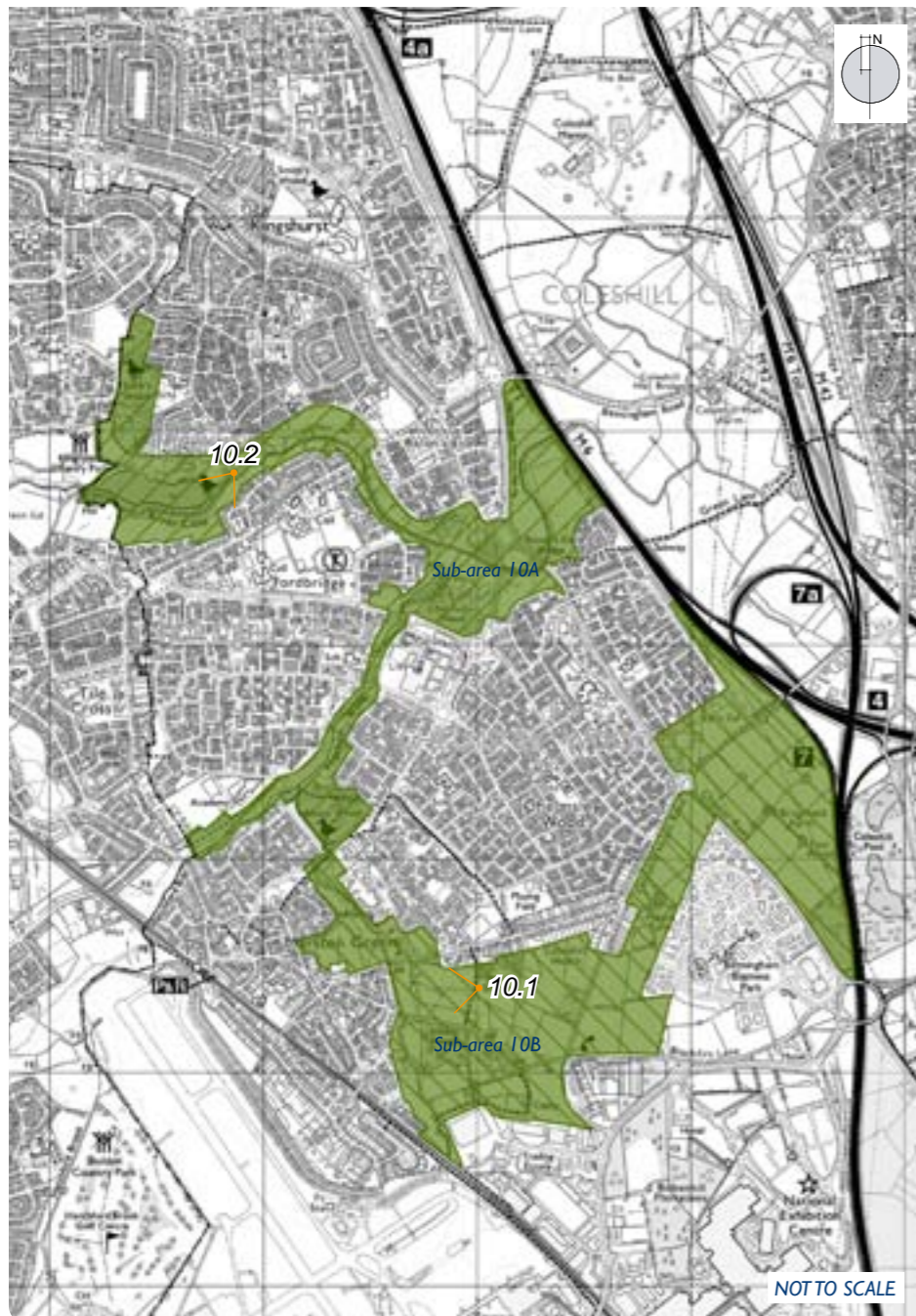
Photograph 9.1:

Hampton Manor and its parkland character provides the setting for the western edge of Hampton in Arden.



Photograph 9.2:

St Peter's Church, Bickenhill, is distinctive in the distance with its spire creating a prominent landmark in the skyline.



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## Description:

This area covering approximately 3km<sup>2</sup> comprises a series of open spaces and green wedges within an urban area, that provide vital recreational, wildlife and nature conservation opportunities to the townspeople.

This area largely comprises managed green spaces including parks, recreation grounds, sports fields, cemetery, allotments and woodland as typical of the peri-urban fringe. Extensive tree cover sets this area apart from the remaining urban area to the north east of Solihull.

This area has a strong network of footpaths being part of a series of recreational routes, however, west of Chester Road the number of footpaths decline significantly such that the area does not provide any form of public access to the countryside.

The northern part of this character area comprises the Kingfisher Country Park, which follows the valley of the River Cole through to Birmingham. The area also features the Cole Valley Way, a 7-mile recreational route. This park is a designated Local Nature Reserve and features areas of ancient woodland.

Table 10: Key Characteristics of LCA 10 - Urban Green Spaces

Component	Characteristics
Topography	• Generally flat landform ranging from 80m to 100m AOD.
Geology	• Mudstone of Mercia Mudstone Group.
Soils	• Largely permeable alluvial and glaciofluvial deposits of sands and gravels predominantly following the watercourses, naturally wet with shallow groundwater. • Slowly permeable clayey silty soils, seasonally wet with impeded drainage.
Drainage	• River Cole, Kingshurst Brook, Low Brook, Hatachford Brook along with Babbs Mill Lake, Meriden Lake, ditches and other smaller ponds and pools.
Land Use	• Recreation is the main land use and includes several parks, and Local Nature Reserves. Other uses comprise Agriculture, deciduous woodland and cemetery.
Vegetation Cover	• Tree cover is extensive and includes street trees, hedgerow trees, woodlands (some ancient) and trees within the parks and along the watercourses.
Development	• No major settlement in the area, being surrounded by the built environment of Solihull. • Road infrastructure is present though limited within the north-western extent. • Electricity pylon lines are present within the eastern extent.
Historic Value	• A number of ancient woodlands are present.
Accessibility	• Extensive public footpath and cycleway network as it comprises recreational green spaces. • Accessibility to the east adjacent to the M6 is limited.
Visual Dynamic	• The general visibility consists of medium to short distance views that are medium level, framed and wide, some deep and in a horizontal orientation.
Key Features	• Kingfisher Country Park • Babbs Mill Lake • River Cole • Important publicly accessible green space providing good recreational and amenity value. • Good ecological value • Ancient woodlands and mature oak trees provide evidence of the former Arden landscape.

## Sensitivities and Pressures:

- Neglect and potential loss of veteran trees and ancient woodland. Neglect of woodland management will decrease the long-term sustainability of tree cover in this characteristically wooded area. Small woodland blocks may be ancient but are not registered if less than 2 hectares although recognised as important in the Habitat Biodiversity Audit.
- Views of business parks and their associated equipment detract from the character of this area.
- Pressure for development within the area is evident at Babbs Mill. This would lead to a loss of open space and impact upon the ancient woodlands.
- The landscape within urban Solihull is sensitive to loss of tree cover and is important to the setting of the settlement and providing essential green space.
- Maintenance of public rights of way, which are prone to erosion and saturation.
- Noise from the M6 impacts upon the tranquillity of the areas.
- Expansion of Birmingham Business Park is likely to reduce amount of green space.
- Pressure from the future proposal of HS2 within the southern part of the LCA close to the M42.



Photograph 10.1:

Green space within this LCA provides important recreation and amenity for the local community, such as at Marston Green Recreation Ground.



Photograph 10.2:

Babb's Mill Park and lake adjacent to the River Cole has good ecological and amenity value. It is part of the Kingfisher Country Park which weaves through this part of the Borough and helps define this LCA.

# Solihull Borough Local Character Guide

(Non-technical Summary)

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